

THE CHARACTER OF AN INDEPENDENT WHIG:

***A STUDY OF THE WORK OF JOHN TRENCHARD AND
THOMAS GORDON, INCLUDING A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF
BERNARD MANDEVILLE***

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Thesis Abstract

Traditionally *Cato's Letters* have been seen as a keynote text in the construction of the civic humanist paradigm, a perspective which has come to dominate contemporary understanding of the intellectual currents at work in the shaping of eighteenth century Britain and America. Within this paradigm the *Letters* have been viewed as emblematic of a 'neo-Harringtonian' critique of Court corruption and the 'new economic order'.

However there are significant problems with this interpretation and this thesis argues that the attitude of Trenchard and Gordon towards Walpole's ministry was more nuanced than is usually suggested; that they were prepared to lend his administration their support when occasion demanded. Against the trend to downplay the religious and ideological differences between Whigs and Tories, in order to prioritise the Court-Country division, this thesis suggests that Trenchard and Gordon's position towards Walpole can best be understood in terms of their commitment to traditional Whig principles of freedom of conscience and opposition to arbitrary rule, rather than on the basis of a preoccupation with issues of wealth and virtue. Contrary to the accepted view that Trenchard and Gordon were opposed to commerce and the financial instruments which it generated, and that they viewed a society motivated by self-interest as a threat to civic virtue and liberty, this thesis contends that their 'scientific' political and moral philosophy both naturalised self-interest and redrew it as the foundation of liberty.

In the process of calling into question 'Cato's' status as a civic humanist icon, this thesis also points to similarities between Trenchard and Gordon's thought and that of Bernard Mandeville, who conventionally has been represented as Cato's antithesis. By comparing the work of all three writers, and the way in which they were viewed by contemporaries, it is argued that in terms of religious, political and moral philosophy there are major points of convergence in their ideology.

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Introduction

The subjects of this thesis are John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, two political writers who came to prominence around 1720. Their fame largely rests on their co-authorship of *The Independent Whig*, a weekly series of anti-clerical papers, and more notably *Cato's Letters*, a series of essays on political and religious subjects which appeared, under the signature of 'Cato', first in the *London Journal* and then in the *British Journal* from November 1720 to July 1723 and which, like *The Independent Whig*, were later collected in book form.¹ *The Independent Whig* is largely concerned with issues of religion: the relationship between the Church and the state, the role of the clergy, freedom of conscience and, particularly, the official strictures placed upon dissenters. Both of these publications enjoyed widespread popularity, not only in Great Britain but also in France and America throughout the eighteenth century, as did Gordon's translations of the histories of Sallust and Tacitus and his accompanying pointedly political commentaries, which drew parallels with the present and were similar in tone to *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters*. By 1737 bound volumes of *The Independent Whig* had gone through at least seven editions in Great Britain and two in America and in 1767 it appeared in a French translation by Baron d'Holbach under the title *L'Espirit du*

¹Trenchard and Gordon were the authors of 43 of the 55 numbers of *The Independent Whig*. In the sixth edition of the collected papers Gordon attributed authorship of the individual numbers: 'I have, at the End of each Paper, put the initial Letter of the Name of the Gentleman who wrote it.', *The Independent Whig: Or, a Defence of Primitive Christianity And our Ecclesiastical Establishment Against The Exorbitant Claims and Encroachments of Fanatical and Disaffected Clergymen*, [T.G., J.T. and A.C.] (London, 1732). It is generally accepted that the ten numbers of *The Independent Whig* which bear the initial 'C' were written by the deist author Anthony Collins. It was perhaps on account of the great stir caused by *Cato's Letters* that Robert Molesworth laid claim to a part in their authorship, although Trenchard and Gordon repudiated the attempted appropriation. See Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, MS G23, Trenchard-Simpson Correspondence, John Trenchard to William Simpson, 25 October [1721] and 8 November [1721];

clergé.² Similarly, *Cato's Letters* enjoyed a wide circulation. Two partial collections appeared in Britain in 1721, followed by complete and then by expanded editions in 1724, 1731, 1733, 1737 and 1748 and by a final, corrected edition in 1754-5.³ Dutch and French translations of the *Letters* appeared in 1754 and 1790 respectively. Gordon's *Tacitus* also proved equally popular on both sides of the Atlantic as well as in France. A French translation of his *Sallust* appeared in 1759 and translations of both his *Sallust* and his *Tacitus* were published during the French Revolution.

It is unfortunate that Trenchard and Gordon, so much read throughout the eighteenth century, should be so misread by historians today. This thesis seeks to address that misreading. The methodology it adopts to achieve this aim is an examination of their work in three major contexts, that of religion, politics and philosophy. It does so because these issues dominated the writings of Trenchard and Gordon. The following chapters show that these three aspects of Trenchard and Gordon's thought are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. In the process of showing this, it will become apparent that the hitherto accepted reading of the ideological basis of Trenchard and Gordon's work is invalid. The wider significance of this finding is that it calls into question the status of the civic humanist paradigm as the supreme vantage point for viewing the eighteenth

and *Cato's Letters Or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), dedication, p. 8.

²Holbach also used Trenchard's name as a shield when publishing his own fiercely anticlerical *Le contagion sacrée* (1768), presumably deciding not to acknowledge as his own a book that might be considered blasphemous.

³One historian has noted: 'The popularity and influence of *The London Journal* increased rapidly in the country as well as in London, and comments of the time refer to it more frequently than to any of its contemporaries. In London, the demand was said to have been so great on at least one occasion that the price was forced up from three halfpence to sixpence and even to a shilling, "a price hardly

century. This is because Trenchard and Gordon have been accorded a central role by advocates of the civic humanist paradigm in the formation of republican ideology in America and Great Britain in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 1 discusses the conventional reading of Trenchard and Gordon as civic humanist icons. The small number of dissenting voices, such as Ronald Hamowy, Marie McMahon and Michael Zuckert, who have cast doubt on the accepted representation of Trenchard and Gordon, are also briefly discussed. Welcome as these voices are, however, they present an incomplete account of Trenchard and Gordon's thought. Hamowy concentrates almost exclusively on *Cato's Letters* and emphasises their Lockean dimension. McMahon, on the other hand, while examining a wider range of Trenchard and Gordon's work, stresses the authors' anticlericalism. Zuckert, like Hamowy, concentrates almost entirely on the Lockean aspect of *Cato's Letters*. This thesis differs from previous studies in that, as stated above, it integrates the different elements of Trenchard and Gordon's thought in order to get closer to understanding the ideas and values the authors sought to convey and to understanding how they were read by their British and American audiences. To a limited, and not uncritical, extent it is in sympathy with the methodological writings of Quentin Skinner.

CHAPTER 2 questions the validity of the Court-Country dichotomy which forms the basis of the civic humanist paradigm. It argues that the Whig/Tory division continued to operate as the dominant political axis after 1714 and that Trenchard

ever given before" for a newspaper [*The London Journal*, 18 March 1721]', C.B. Realey, '*The Journal and its Authors 1720-1723*', *Bulletin of the University of Kansas*, 36 (1935), 1-38, at 32.

and Gordon remained Whigs first and foremost. However, as a result of ignoring the close relationship played by religion and politics in Trenchard and Gordon's work, they have been mistakenly characterised as 'Country' opposition writers.

Both *Cato's Letters* and other works by Trenchard and Gordon are examined in order to show that although critical of the Whig establishment they still rallied to its defence in time of crisis; that it still held out the best hope of meeting the concerns which most occupied the two writers. This chapter argues that for Trenchard and Gordon, and for their contemporaries, the question of political sovereignty was still linked inextricably to issues of religious doctrine. Their suspicion of High-Church Tories, who they believed to be Jacobite sympathisers, makes them unlikely collaborators in a 'Country' opposition. The primary consideration of both men was to ensure the Protestant succession and a wider religious toleration. They were prepared to compromise on other areas of principle, such as frequent elections and a standing army, in order to secure these ends. The ideological basis of Trenchard and Gordon's thought was not a belief in the corrupting power of wealth, which threatened civic virtue, but a fear of the encroaching power of the established Church.

In support of these arguments, chapter 2 draws on manuscript sources – Trenchard's personal correspondence, including letters from Gordon - which have hitherto gone unnoticed by scholars for the most part. Neither Hamowy nor

McMahon seem to have been aware of these papers, which cast Trenchard and Gordon in a previously unobserved light.⁴

CHAPTER 3 argues that Trenchard and Gordon should be seen as predominantly in the modern natural law tradition. Ignorance or avoidance of what they had to say about human nature has led to them being labelled mistakenly as key figures in ‘neo-Harringtonianism’. Yet their view of virtue was based largely on a naturalistic concept of human nature which they derived from the sensationalist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke.⁵ Essentially, they regarded man as a creature ruled by his passions rather than by reason. It was impossible, they argued, to expect men to put the public interest before their private interest and the only way to persuade them to do so was by showing them, forcibly if necessary, that their long-term private interest was best served by sacrificing their immediate desires. Their interpretation of virtue in purely instrumental terms, and as a species of self-interest, makes it clear that their perspective was modern rather than classical. In a complete departure from the standard dicta of civic humanism they insisted that the potential for virtue, redefined in their terms, was inherent in commercial man and that the basis of his liberty was rooted in his self-interest, which would always limit the amount of misgovernment he was willing to endure.

⁴The Trenchard-Simpson papers are the only extant personal correspondence of note of Trenchard or, indeed, of Gordon. Only Margaret Jacob appears to have noticed the existence, if not the full significance, of these papers. She refers to the papers in an endnote in relation to a letter from Anthony Collins to William Simpson which is included in the collection. See *The Radical Enlightenment* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 178.

⁵The term ‘sensationalist’, employed here and elsewhere in this thesis in relation to both Hobbes and Locke, is used advisedly. Whether or not scholars of the history of ideas consider Locke, in particular, a sensationalist philosopher, and indeed whether or not Locke would have seen himself in such terms, this is how Trenchard and Gordon saw him. They linked Locke with Hobbes and viewed both as sensationalist philosophers. Critics of Trenchard and Gordon were of the same opinion and damned the authors of *Cato’s Letters* and *The Independent Whig* by association by ranking them with Hobbes and Locke. See chapter 3 of this thesis.

Connections with the Dutch Hobbesian republication tradition, particularly with the de la Court brothers, are also discussed in this chapter. In addition, it examines contemporary attacks on Trenchard and Gordon's materialist philosophy, which was perceived to carry political implications, and their categorisation as fellow travellers with Hobbes and Spinoza.

CHAPTER 4 examines the validity of the connection, identified by J.G.A. Pocock, Margaret Jacob and others, between neo-Harringtonianism and deism. The politics and 'deism' of Toland, Tindal and Collins are analysed and it is argued that in the case of all these 'radicals', radical philosophy did not equate to radical politics. It also discusses how Trenchard's form of 'deism' differed markedly from that of most other freethinkers who were branded with the same label and argues that it resembled more closely the thought of Hume.

At the same time, it places Trenchard and Gordon's work in the wider context of the views expressed by their fellow 'neo-Harringtonians'. As Trenchard and Gordon have been taken as representative of an ideology, neo-Harringtonianism, it is necessary to look at others who are said to share that ideology and to compare their writings in order to identify whether they do indeed possess a common core of beliefs and, if so, what these are. This chapter points up differences in their thought which have been obscured by the tendency to place them under a single banner. It also, however, argues that the Grecian Inn coterie as a whole did not form an opposition to Walpole's ministry and that they were united by a commitment to religious toleration and free thought.

CHAPTER 5 considers similarities in the thought of ‘Cato’ and Mandeville, who in civic humanist iconography are represented in antithetical terms as, respectively, saint and sinner and as symbols of the opposition between virtue and commerce. Building on arguments put forward in chapter 3, it shows that, like Mandeville, Trenchard and Gordon possessed a view of human nature which is fundamentally at variance with the civic humanist paradigm and one which situates them in the modern natural law tradition of Hobbes and Locke. All three writers believed man was wholly selfish and would always, given the opportunity, pursue his private interest before that of the public. Consequently, they argued, man had to be manipulated or constrained by custom or law to serve the good of society. Placing little confidence in man’s ability to act according to the dictates of right reason, they trusted instead to his unwavering commitment to his own self-interest which, when confronted by legal and social strictures, would ensure that it was brought home to him that it was in his private interest not to oppose the public good.⁶ In the eyes of both Trenchard and Gordon and Mandeville, this was true as much for governors as for the people and it is this view of human nature, constrained by external checks rather than reason, which informed their political pragmatism. Similarly, the religious toleration which all three men persistently advocated was underwritten by their belief in man’s incapacity to be guided by reason and to penetrate ultimate truths. It followed that if man could not justifiably lay claim to

⁶In most matters, Trenchard and Gordon believed men incapable of being guided by reason, defined as calm, unadulterated deliberation, but considered them to be possessed of sense enough to be able to judge rightly whether or not they were oppressed by their governors or by Churchmen. What passed for reason was merely the checking of one passion by another. See, especially, *CL*, I, no. 6, p. 55 and no. 39, pp. 273-76. On the occasions when Trenchard and Gordon did champion reason it was in the context of condemning superstition or the authority claimed by priests. See, for example, *The Independent Whig*, nos. 31, 39 and 53, pp. 192, 240 and 444.

knowledge of God's essence and His will, he held no mandate to persecute others for their beliefs, except when they disturbed the civil peace.

Chapter 5 also argues that similarities in the religious history of England and Holland, regarding questions of sovereignty and toleration, shaped the attitudes of Trenchard and Gordon and Mandeville in like ways. As a result of the role of the Orthodox Calvinist Church in Holland and High Church Anglicanism in England they both condemned Church interference in government and were committed to religious toleration.

CHAPTER 6 analyses further the connections between Trenchard and Gordon's thought and that of Mandeville. Previously historians have noted the influence of the French moralistes in Mandeville's work. This chapter argues that Trenchard and Gordon's work shows that they drew on a number of the same sources. Like Mandeville, Trenchard and Gordon followed Pascal and other Jansenist writers by judging self-love under two separate aspects, the rigoristic and the utilitarian.⁷ In accord with the author of *The Fable of the Bees*, they believed that, carefully managed, even men's vices could be turned to good effect and be made to serve the public interest. Also like Mandeville, they leaned on arguments presented by St. Evremond in favour of political pragmatism and in defence of luxury. All these

⁷It needs to be stressed that Trenchard and Gordon's 'utilitarianism', like that of Mandeville, was based on egoistic psychology. The term 'utilitarian' is used here, and elsewhere in this thesis, in its loose sense. Applied to Trenchard and Gordon, or indeed to Mandeville, it is obviously anachronistic. However, it is a more apt description than to label their thought 'Epicurean', which seems fraught with greater difficulties. Their thinking can not be termed utilitarian in the strict sense of the word since for them utility, or the greatest happiness principle, was not their sole standard for judging actions. See chapters 3 and 6 of this thesis.

sources, which Trenchard and Gordon shared with Mandeville, were also linked by a commitment to religious toleration.

CHAPTER 7 argues that Trenchard and Gordon valued Tacitus and Machiavelli not for what they had to say about civic virtue but for their political pragmatism. In the account given by proponents of the civic humanist paradigm, Machiavelli's English successors are portrayed as inheritors of an incontestably classical republican tradition. Similarly, it is assumed that these men read Tacitus as a moral historian and advocate of a republican virtue that was long passed even in his day. The impression conveyed is that neo-Harringtonians were ignorant, or dismissive, of an alternative Machiavelli or an alternative Tacitus and that these counter interpretations played no part in the formulation of their political ideas. Yet although Harrington may have consolidated Machiavelli's reputation as a republican writer, the obverse image Machiavelli had always presented still retained its currency in the early eighteenth century.⁸ Both he and Tacitus had long been seen as ambiguous republicans. Machiavelli's republican credentials were cast in doubt by *The Prince* and Tacitus' obscurity allowed him to be claimed by both defenders of absolute monarchy and their opponents.

Chapter 7 goes on to argue that Gordon's reading of Tacitus and Machiavelli echoed earlier commentaries of Tacitists by those such as Lipsius and, particularly, Boccalini. Like them, Gordon was sceptical about the possibility of a modern

⁸To assert the complex nature of Machiavelli's republicanism may seem to state the obvious. However, the emphasis in recent years on the republican face of Machiavelli has obscured this complexity and the complexity of reactions he provoked in his readers. The portrait of Machiavelli presented by Felix Raab might be considered outdated by some historians today but it still offers valuable insights. In England in the seventeenth century, and on into the eighteenth century, Machiavelli's political theory was seen to be many-faceted and was adopted in equal measure by

republic founded on civic virtue. While his republicanism, like of that of Trenchard, was coloured by Tacitus and Machiavelli, it was not coloured by their supposed devotion to the ideal of civic virtue but by their lessons in *raison d'état*.

CHAPTER 8 looks at how Trenchard and Gordon's works were received in eighteenth century America. It rejects the idea that a simple analogy can be drawn between the supposed classical republicanism of Trenchard and Gordon and that of the American Revolutionary generation. It argues that Franklin, Jefferson, John Adams and others were no more classical republicans than were Trenchard and Gordon. *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig* were cited widely in America in defence of such traditionally 'liberal' causes as freedom of speech and religious toleration. The argument that the American colonies should break free from Great Britain on the grounds of self-interest, rather than on the grounds of Court corruption, was also taken from *Cato's Letters*.

The purpose of this chapter is not to attempt an in-depth analysis of the reception of *Cato's Letters* in America. Its limited remit is to question, in the light of textual evidence, the notion that Trenchard and Gordon were read by American revolutionaries in the terms set by revisionist historians.

Chapter I

The Historiographical Background

In recent years, from about the late 1960s, *Cato's Letters* has become a keynote text in the revisionist interpretation of the ideological origins of the American Revolution. Previously, the accepted version had been that Lockean liberalism had formed the centrepiece of America's founding ethos. This is the position set out for example in Hartz's classic work *The Liberal Tradition in America*.¹ The revisionist school of historians, spearheaded by Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood and which includes J.G.A. Pocock amongst its leading figures, overturned this interpretation and argued that Locke, far from providing a template for the American Revolution in *The Two Treatises of Government*, had exerted only a negligible influence on political thought before 1776.² In the revisionist interpretation Lockean liberalism was sidelined and recast as the ideological antithesis of Revolutionary political thought.³ The new orthodoxy for viewing the eighteenth century became the civic humanist or civic republican paradigm, which has gained wide acceptance largely through the work of Pocock, and which has now displaced the traditional liberal reading. In the words of Pocock: 'The civic

¹See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1955).

²See Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969); Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); and J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1975).

³Pocock has argued: 'The idea of power reverting to the people can, of course, be stated in the language of Locke's *Second Treatise*, but it is overwhelmingly important to realise that the predominant language in which it was expressed by eighteenth century radicals was one of virtue, corruption, and reform, which is Machiavellian, classical, and Aristotelian, and in which Locke did not figure.', 'Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (1972), 119-134, at 124.

humanist idea is applied as a paradigm in the interpretation of social thought in the eighteenth century by particularizing the ways in which it was used as a mode of criticism against the Whig oligarchy.’⁴ The civic humanist paradigm asserts that man’s personality is essentially political and is fully expressed only in the practice of citizenship as an active virtue. To qualify for citizenship the individual must be an arms-bearing freeholder of landed property. For without property he must be a servant and without a public and civic monopoly of arms his citizenship must be corrupted. In Pocock’s monumental work, *The Machiavellian Moment*, he traces a civic humanist paradigm of political thought and action from the Renaissance revival of Aristotelianism through seventeenth and eighteenth century England to the American revolutionary period and beyond.

Within this paradigm the republican tradition, the tradition of civic virtue, is regarded as having provided the values, aspirations and rhetoric of American Revolutionary ideology. And in republican historiography *Cato’s Letters* is represented as one of the most important vehicles for the transmission of this tradition to pre-Revolutionary America. The influence of the *Letters* is certainly undisputed and individual numbers or extracts were reprinted and circulated widely and quotations appeared in every newspaper from Boston to Savannah.⁵ Copies of both the *Letters* and the *Independent Whig* were also to be found in American college and subscription libraries during the 1760s and 1770s, and private libraries,

⁴J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Cambridge paradigms and Scotch philosophers: a study of the relations between the civic humanist and the civil jurisprudential interpretation of eighteenth-century social thought.’, *Wealth and Virtue*, ed. Michael Ignatieff and Istvan Hont (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1983), 235-53, at 236.

⁵See Elizabeth Christine Cook, *Literary Influences in Colonial Newspapers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), p. 81. The Philadelphia *American Weekly Mercury* began reprinting the

including that of Thomas Jefferson, also frequently included the work of Trenchard and Gordon. In the words of the American historian Clinton Rossiter, 'no one can spend any time in the newspapers, library inventories, and pamphlets of colonial America without realizing that *Cato's Letters* rather than Locke's *Civil Government* was the most popular, quotable, esteemed source of political ideas in the colonial period.'⁶

However the primary focus of this thesis is not the relationship of *Cato's Letters* to the historiographical debate concerning America's founding doctrine; its aim is to challenge the interpretation of Trenchard and Gordon as classical republicans and to question the dominant position ascribed to the civic humanist paradigm in Britain.⁷ It is the contention of this thesis that *Cato's Letters* do not fit the civic humanist paradigm. Trenchard and Gordon did not enthusiastically endorse the republican ideals of citizenship, civic participation and classical virtue which they are meant to have conveyed to the American colonists and it is by no means certain that they were read in such a way by their British and colonial audiences.⁸ What is problematic with the revisionist reading of *Cato's Letters* is its selectivity. A number of the *Letters* are highly critical of the South Sea scandal and of Walpole's

letters in 1722, while they were still running serially in the British press, and New York, Boston and South Carolina papers quickly followed suit.

⁶Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1953), p. 141.

⁷As indicated in the introduction, however, some space has been given to a discussion of the way in which Americans in the eighteenth century may have read *Cato's Letters*, challenging the prevailing assumption that they were read in the terms set by the civic humanist paradigm. See chapter 8.

⁸The pseudonym 'Cato' was adopted to honour Cato of Utica (95-46 B.C.) the unbending adversary of Julius Caesar and champion of republican liberty. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the name had exclusively 'Country' or Tory connotations. During the first half of the eighteenth century it became the nom de plume of writers of both parties who wished to suggest that they too, like Cato of Utica, spoke from a spirit of disinterested patriotism. In 1716, as the Jacobite uprising raged, 'Cato' was employed in a pamphlet by Jonathan Smedley, chaplain to Lord Sunderland, as an advocate for the Whig ministry. Smedley compared William III to Cato and James II to Caesar. A few years later, in 1722, the ministerial press put 'Cato' to similar use in the face of another Jacobite

attempts to screen influential figures close to Court who were implicated in the affair. The criticism is taken out of context by revisionists, however, in order to support the civic humanist or 'neo-Harringtonian' thesis, which has at its heart the conflict between virtue and corruption. 'Neo-Harringtonianism' is the term applied by Pocock in *The Machiavellian Moment* and elsewhere in his writings to what he describes as the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century manifestation of civic humanism.⁹ At the core of neo-Harringtonianism is a definition of man as a political animal - Aristotle mediated through Machiavelli and Harrington - who realised his essential nature through active participation as a citizen. The challenge this conception of man faced was the danger posed by commerce, and the financial instruments it spawned, which threatened political stability and virtue.¹⁰

In brief, Pocock argues that neo-Harringtonianism was a reworking of Harrington's classical republican doctrine to meet the political reality which confronted radical Whigs after the 1688 Revolution and that it was characterised by opposition to Court corruption, both political and venal. The main theme of republican theory from classical Greece and Rome onwards, Pocock holds, was the problem of the instability of political institutions and their susceptibility to a cycle of decay. Machiavelli, whose work Harrington had revived, had stressed the role of the virtuous citizen in halting this decay. It was the citizen's duty to defend the liberty of the state by keeping a rein on governors whose rapacious appetite for power would otherwise plunge the republic into tyranny. The primary way in which he

threat. See Reed Browning, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 6-8.

⁹See, in particular, *Machiavellian Moment*, chapter 12.

¹⁰See *ibid.*, pp. 406-505.

displayed his virtue was through his participation in the citizen militia. Military virtue was one with political virtue because both might be presented in terms of the same end - the common good of the republic. Harrington viewed a militia as essential to ensuring the longevity of a republic but he located the material foundation for virtue in the possession of landed property. Only by possessing landed property could a man enjoy the independence which was a prerequisite for virtue. Both these elements, in the Pocockian analysis, were important in the formation of neo-Harringtonianism. Arms and land were seen as the preconditions of individual civic and moral autonomy. A third important element was an interpretation of history which reconciled the republican ideals of radical Whigs to the Revolution Settlement by presenting the limited monarchy established in 1688 as a return to England's ancient balanced constitution and to a liberty enjoyed and safeguarded by a citizenry composed of arms-bearing freeholders.

The neo-Harringtonian or Country opposition to the Court was based on the belief that the balanced constitution of Crown, Lords and Commons was in danger of being destroyed by the Crown's attempt to annex greater powers to itself. One of the perceived dangers was the growth of a professional or standing army, which provoked the standing army controversy in the last few years of William III's reign. Trenchard, with his then collaborator Walter Moyle, played a leading role between 1698 and 1702 on the opposition side of the pamphlet war over standing armies. The Court was also attacked for its misuse of patronage, through the distribution of offices and pensions, which signalled a movement in power away from the Commons and in favour of the Crown.

Another feature of the Country platform, Pocock contends, was its opposition to the socio-economic changes brought about by the financial revolution that had begun in the 1690s. A central contention of Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* is that the development of the Bank of England and national debt marked a turning point in the modern history of English and Scottish political ideology. Neo-Harringtonians, he argues, fiercely denounced the transition from a society based on landed property, the function of which was to maintain the reality of personal autonomy, liberty and virtue, to one defined by the morally and politically corrupting influence of mobile property. Public credit, in the form of the national debt and the stock exchange, was regarded with suspicion because it appeared to represent a shift in power. Harrington's dictum that power followed property was generally accepted and it was believed that the institution of credit had handed too much power to the monied men of the City.¹¹

Cato's Letters have generally been characterised as a contribution to the Country party's employment of the politics of virtue as a strategy of opposition. The letters have been seen by Pocock and others as a scathing critique both of Walpolean corruption and of a society in which, in the wake of financial revolution, civic virtue had become a devalued commodity. M.M. Goldsmith has argued: 'Within the prevalent ideology [civic humanism] of early eighteenth-century Britain, as John Pocock has shown, there were a number of possible ways of handling the relations of land, trade and credit. In all of them "credit" or the "monied interest" posed a problem.' He goes on to maintain:

¹¹See *ibid.*, chapter 13 and 'The Machiavellian Moment Revisited: A Study in History and Ideology', *The Journal of Modern History*, 53 (1981), 49-72, at 64.

Many ... believed that liberty could only be preserved and England's decline into moral corruption, despotism and barbarity prevented by promoting public and private virtue. This was the position of those Country ideologists who deployed the ideas of Machiavelli, Harrington and Sidney in castigating the luxury and degeneracy of Augustan England. In the mid twenties, Bolingbroke mounted his patriotic opposition to Walpole on his 'republican' and 'Whig' Country ideology. Earlier, squirely and parliamentary suspicion of moneyed men had exploded into active hostility in the South Sea Bubble crises. Trenchard and Gordon were well prepared to show the evils of wealth, luxury and corruption. Many contemporaries must have been ready to accept the view that the Bubble was a consequence of men's avarice and love of luxury.

Goldsmith concludes: '[T]he prevalent form of argument in the first four decades of the eighteenth century was fixed by the ideology of public virtue, even more stridently reiterated by Bolingbroke and by the Opposition to Walpole.'¹²

Similarly, Isaac Kramnick has insisted that *Cato's Letters* exhibits 'a nostalgic conservatism that lashes out at the economic and social order' and that 'one of the over-riding themes of *Cato's Letters* is a rejection of the new economic order.'¹³

And J.A.W. Gunn has contended that 'Cato's theme was corruption – the prevailing morality displayed in the business of the South-Sea Bubble, presented against a background of the decline of classical commonwealths.' He goes on to argue that Trenchard and Gordon followed Algernon Sidney, and Machiavelli, in approving the stern virtues of Sparta and early Rome and in believing that the

¹²M.M. Goldsmith, *Private Vices, Public Benefits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 132-3. Like most others who subscribe to the civic humanist paradigm, Goldsmith makes the mistake of conflating Trenchard and Gordon's criticism of Walpole's handling of the South Sea affair with Bolingbroke's all-out opposition to the ministry. Ideological differences between Trenchard and Gordon, on one side, and Bolingbroke, on the other, are discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹³I. Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 243, 246. On the other hand, Kramnick recognises Trenchard and Gordon's political 'liberalism': 'In accepting Locke's ideas and in his concern for individual rights, Cato is a liberal ... [He] is truly liberal and progressive, and, in his rigorous espousal of Locke's basic principles, anticipates even the liberalism of Mill.', p. 249. Kramnick's assertion that Trenchard and Gordon display a

‘safest social climate remained one in which riches were “either totally banished, or little regarded.” [Sidney’s words].’ In Gunn’s opinion: ‘Sidney’s teaching was enshrined in Old-Whig orthodoxy by Trenchard and Gordon and formed a central assumption in their denunciation of public morality in the era of the South-Sea Bubble.’¹⁴

This thesis counters these views and argues that Trenchard and Gordon’s criticism was not intended to undermine the new structural economic status quo or to add voice to opposition calls for the removal of a Whig ministry in order to replace it with a Country coalition.¹⁵ Trenchard and Gordon were not really concerned with liberty and virtue in the classical sense, they believed it was totally unrealistic based on their understanding of human nature. What they set out to defend was liberty in its modern, individualistic sense. Undeniably Trenchard and Gordon did employ civic humanist rhetoric, or as Gordon puts it to his audience ‘let us make use of the Roman language’.¹⁶ However, when they used the language of civic humanism it was as a rhetorical tool and not as an expression of an ideological

‘dualism’ in their political writings – political liberalism and economic ‘conservatism’ – is based, as argued in this thesis, on a misunderstanding of the target of their criticism.

¹⁴J.A.W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1983), pp. 19, 100. Although Gunn concedes that ‘[i]n a long succession of papers, the pens behind “Cato” insisted that prosperity could not flourish without liberty’, he then accuses Trenchard and Gordon of ‘incoherence’. He writes: ‘Trenchard and Gordon sometimes courted incoherence just because they insisted on giving reasons for valuing freedom and public virtue, for the very factors that they saw as insecure or impossible without freedom seemed actually to threaten its very existence [sic].’, pp. 100-1. Gunn’s complaint, it seems, is that Trenchard and Gordon offered prosperity as one of the reasons why liberty should be valued, whilst at the same time they believed prosperity was corrupting and that poverty was the foundation of virtue and, in turn, of liberty. However, Gunn’s accusation is unjust. As it will be shown in later chapters, Trenchard and Gordon not only argued that prosperity could not flourish without liberty but that prosperity was the bulwark of liberty. This was because, in their view, men could be depended upon to defend their civic liberties if they understood that a government which robbed them of those liberties could then, with greater ease, rob them of their property and their purses – possessions which were dearer to modern man than, say, the right to annual elections.

¹⁵The question of Trenchard and Gordon’s stance on the financial revolution and that of their categorisation as ‘Country’ ideologues are discussed in detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

paradigm. This is an important distinction. When Trenchard and Gordon adopted the language of civic humanism in their attack on Walpole's administration for its mismanagement of the South Sea scandal, they were merely using a vocabulary created when the Whigs were in opposition. It does not mean they were ideologically opposed to the Whig establishment. The vocabulary of civic humanism had originally been deployed by Whigs when attacking Court Tories at the end of the seventeenth century. It was an effective, well-used tool for criticising an administration of any political colour, as Bolingbroke later discovered, because 'corruption' and constitutional 'balance' could be, and were, variously interpreted and it automatically secured for the critic the moral high-ground. It is no surprise, therefore, that Trenchard and Gordon should have adopted the civic humanist idiom in order to level criticism at the government and, equally, that they were able to abandon it with apparent ease when the government and nation faced a perceived Jacobite threat.

As Quentin Skinner has shown in his essay, 'The Principles and Practice of Opposition: The Case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', the patriotic rhetoric of neo-Harringtonianism provided an established and unassailable vehicle for launching an attack on government, without necessarily implying a belief in the principles invoked.¹⁷ The point of Skinner's essay is not to take issue with the Namierite contention that Bolingbroke's motives were entirely unprincipled and self-interested – indeed he assumes that interpretation is correct and that revisionist

¹⁶CL, I, no. 18, p. 131.

¹⁷See Quentin Skinner, 'The Principles and Practice of Opposition: The Case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society in Honour of J.H. Plumb*, ed. N. McKendrick, (London, Europa 1994), pp. 93-128.

historians are naively mistaken in denying it – but to refute the idea that it follows from this that Bolingbroke's professed principles are irrelevant. Skinner argues that Bolingbroke adopted these principles because they allowed him to present his 'general Opposition' not as disloyalty but as patriotism. The aim here is not to suggest that the same analysis holds true for Trenchard and Gordon – they were critical of but not opposed to Walpole's administration – but to make the more obvious point that it is naive to accept that the only reason why a writer, particularly a political writer, might invoke particular principles is because they form the framework of ideological belief for him. It is a point, however, that is obscured if one subscribes to Pocock's methodology of focusing on languages, in this case the language of civic humanism. Skinner, although indebted to the methodological writings of Pocock, recognises that such an approach can lead one in the direction of a potentially misleading characterisation of an author:

I do feel, however, that if Greenleaf's stress on traditions or Pocock's on languages are treated as methodologies in themselves, they are prone to generate at least two difficulties. There is an obvious danger that if we merely focus on the relations between the vocabulary used by a given writer and the traditions to which he may appear connected by his use of vocabulary, we may become insensitive to instances of irony, obliquity, and other cases in which the writer may seem to be saying something other than what he means. The chief danger, however, is that if we merely concentrate on the language of a given writer, we may run the risk of assimilating him to a completely alien intellectual tradition, and thus of misunderstanding the whole aim of his political works.¹⁸

These are precisely the dangers that Pocock falls prey to in his analysis of *Cato's Letters*. By concentrating, almost to exclusion, on Trenchard and Gordon's use of

¹⁸Quentin Skinner, 'Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action', in *Meaning and Context, Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 97-118, at p. 106. Skinner, here, is discussing the paradox of Bolingbroke, arch-enemy of the Whigs, who in his main political works hijacked a number of radical Whig doctrines. He views as mistaken Pocock's characterisation of Bolingbroke as 'the most spectacular of the neo-Harringtonians'.

the vocabulary of neo-Harringtonianism, Pocock misunderstands entirely the purpose of their work and assimilates them to a tradition that is alien to their beliefs. As Skinner insists, it is not enough to look at an author's use of a set or form of words in isolation; a given statement has to be looked at together with an author's statements on the same subject elsewhere in the text or in other of his texts. Words denoting an idea may be used with varying and quite incompatible intentions. There is also the obvious difficulty that literal meanings of key terms sometimes change over time.¹⁹ Just as with Defoe's work, that of Trenchard and Gordon, replete as it is with irony, can not just be taken at face value.²⁰ They were sophisticated in their use of language and keenly aware of the power of language to mould opinion. One has, therefore, to ask why they employed the language of civic humanism on some occasions and not on others and what this means. In this context, Skinner's comments are particularly apposite:

I am suggesting that what is needed in order to be able to carry the argument beyond this rather unsatisfactory point, is not merely to indicate the traditions of discourse to which a given writer may be appealing, but

¹⁹Of course Pocock realises this himself. He acknowledges that language is not fixed but there seems to be a much greater interpenetration of languages than he allows. As David Wootton argues: 'How are we to describe this interpenetration of languages, this confusion of paradigms? Pocock barely tackles this problem because he scarcely notices it: his insistence that Locke is of marginal importance depends on his classifying texts which employ mixed languages as uniformly republican.', 'The Republican Tradition: From Commonwealth to Common Sense', in *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 1-41, at p. 18. Obviously, a language can be modified as it comes into contact with another language. However in the case of Trenchard and Gordon they were not so much modifying the language of civic humanism as rejecting as unrealistic key concepts such as public virtue. See, in particular, chapters 3, 5 and 6 of this thesis.

Trenchard and Gordon were particularly aware of the ambiguous nature of language. Trenchard observed: 'I have often thought, that most of the chiefs under which mankind suffers, and almost all their polemick disputes are owing to the abuse of words. If men would define what they mean by the sounds which they make use of to express their thoughts, and then keep to those definitions, that is, annex always the same ideas to the same sounds, most of the disputes in the word would be at an end ...', *CL*, II, no. 117, p. 814; also II, nos. 103, 104 and 120.

²⁰See Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', in *Meaning and Context*, pp. 29-67.

also to ask what he may be *doing* when he appeals to the language of those particular traditions.²¹

It is difficult to accept that Trenchard and Gordon believed in civic humanist principles because so much of *Cato's Letters* and their other writings indicates a scepticism about the possibility of civic virtue. Therefore, when they employ the language of civic humanism it would seem reasonable to assume it is adopted as a rhetorical device, the use of which is consistent with their view of the art of politics. Whereas it would appear a contradiction in terms to adhere to a civic humanist ideology and then to undermine the very idea of civic virtue. The civic humanist paradigm only works if one reads *Cato's Letters* selectively, following Pocock and others, but to do so is to mistake rhetoric for ideology and part of the paradigm for the whole. A truer picture of Trenchard and Gordon's ideological position only emerges when one examines the relationship between their philosophical, political and theological thought.²²

They were not alone in their beliefs and this thesis also includes a comparative study of Bernard Mandeville's social and political thought which, it is argued, has major points of convergence with that of Trenchard and Gordon. These points of convergence in ideology, however, have been obscured by the tunnel vision of the civic humanist paradigm which divides all into two opposing camps. Although Pocock is aware of the risk of adopting the 'two buckets fallacy', which regards

²¹Quentin Skinner, 'Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action', in *Meaning and Context*, pp. 97-118, at p. 107.

²²As Skinner has observed: 'Any particular belief in which an historian is interested will [therefore] be likely to present itself holistically as part of a network of beliefs, a network within which the various individual items supply each other with mutual support.', 'A reply to my critics', in *Meaning and Context*, pp. 231-88, at p. 48.

alternative explanations as mutually exclusive, so that to augment one is to detract from another, he goes on argue that:

[W]e are to some extent pushed in that direction by what appears to be a marked hiatus or discontinuity between the vocabulary or language of civic humanism and that of civic jurisprudence ... The child of jurisprudence is liberalism, in which the disjunction between individual and sovereign remains, no matter how close the two are brought to one another; whereas republican virtue pertains immediately to the individual, not as proprietor or rights-bearer but as citizen, sharing self-rule among a number of equals without the need of any prior *translatio*'.²³

It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to find Pocock ready to concede an alternative 'jurisprudential paradigm', held by eighteenth century Scottish theorists and to recognise that this group of men were able to reach an intellectual accommodation between the two paradigms. This alternative, 'largely Cambridge', paradigm argues that Scottish social thought evolved largely outside the maxims and language of the civic humanist paradigm, differentiated from English thought by the central position it accorded to the study of civil jurisprudence. Scotsmen, it is maintained, unlike Englishmen, often studied at Dutch universities and encountered natural law as a general organising principle in a tradition shaped by Pufendorf and Barbeyrac. And since the study of law has from classical times been associated more closely with moral and epistemological philosophy than has the study of civic virtue, it was also possible to integrate Cartesian, Lockean, Shaftesburean or Humean theories about perceptions, ideas, sympathies and passions into a science of man and society.²⁴

²³'Cambridge paradigms and Scotch philosophers', pp. 248-9.

²⁴Chief proponents of this alternative 'Cambridge paradigm' include Duncan Forbes, Quentin Skinner and Richard Tuck. See Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols.

The argument for an alternative paradigm that operated only north of the border, however, is insubstantial and in part is dependent on a curious circular logic. Much of the reasoning behind the idea that the jurisprudential paradigm was restricted to Scottish thinkers rests on an acceptance that the civic humanist paradigm dominated English thought. Once that hegemony is seen to be an illusion, however, it becomes easier to recognise that the jurisprudential paradigm was shared by many Englishmen. The suggestion that a parochial education led to an inability on the part of the English to adopt an alternative 'interpretative matrix' is belied by the fact that, whilst they generally may not have attended Dutch universities, there was a lively intellectual correspondence between the two nations. The republican martyr Algernon Sidney had close ties with the Netherlands and although he is associated with the civic humanist tradition his thought was also rooted in the natural law tradition.²⁵ 'Commonwealthmen' such as John Toland, who abandoned his theological studies at the universities of Utrecht and Leiden to pursue a broader education before returning to England, also shared Locke's close ties with republican thinkers in the Netherlands. There is even a suggestion that Gordon, a Scot, was educated at either the University of Aberdeen or St. Andrews and that he submitted a law thesis at Edinburgh in 1716, which raises the possibility that he may, therefore, have been schooled in the

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); and Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

²⁵See Alan Craig Houston, *Algernon Sidney and the Republican Heritage in England and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), passim; and Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic, 1623-1677* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 16-17, 19, 169 and *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis, 1677-1683* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 352.

jurisprudential attitude of mind that is said to have characterised his fellow countrymen.²⁶

Be that as it may, however, it is evident from a study of Trenchard and Gordon's work that they were both steeped in a natural law tradition that encompassed Grotius, Pufendorf, Barbeyrac, Selden, Locke and Hobbes and that they utilised both civic humanist and classic liberal arguments and seem to have seen no contradiction in running the two in tandem. There is undoubtedly an apparent incompatibility between the two languages. As Pocock would have it, 'the basic concept in republican thinking is *virtus*; the basic concept of all jurisprudence is necessarily *ius*; and there is no known way of representing virtue as a right.'²⁷ However, because many of the concerns underlying both languages are the same – the tension between authority and liberty, social conflict and the corrosive affect of power – and because virtue and rights based systems are effectively alternative means of resolving these concerns, they are not mutually incomprehensible. Indeed, as Quentin Skinner has shown, the civic humanist and jurisprudential paradigms have co-existed since the thirteenth century or earlier.²⁸ It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to find eighteenth century Scottish political theorists presented, by proponents of the 'Cambridge paradigm', as singular in their ability to move fluently between the language of civic humanism and that of jurisprudence. This ignores the same facility in Trenchard and Gordon and their fellow 'classical republicans'. Although, for Trenchard and Gordon at least, as

²⁶See J.M. Bulloch, 'Thomas Gordon, The "Independent Whig"', *Aberdeen University Library Bulletin*, 3 (1918), 598-612, at 600.

²⁷'Cambridge paradigms and Scotch philosophers', p. 248.

²⁸ See *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, I, *passim*.

already noted, the language of civic humanism represented a rhetorical tool rather than an ideological framework. And if, as it is argued here, they should be read as speakers of a language as nuanced as that associated with the Scottish theorists of the period, it is a language as spoken by Hume rather than by Hutcheson: a language that stressed the centrality of interest and opinion, rather than natural sociability, to the construction and maintenance of civil society.

The language spoken by Trenchard and Gordon, however, was also dominated by the idea of natural rights. For despite attempts by revisionists to canonise 'Cato' as a civic humanist icon, it is apparent that *Cato's Letters* not only incorporated the sensationalist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke but also elements of their political philosophy. Trenchard and Gordon made great use of language typical of Lockean liberalism and this permeates the *Letters* from beginning to end. They both endorsed enthusiastically the central views put forward by Locke: the equality of men in the state of nature; consent as the foundation of government; the right of resistance against a monarch who breaks his contract with the people; and the reversion of power to the people on the dissolution of government. Yet conventionally, within the civic humanist paradigm, Trenchard and Gordon have been seen as a counter to Locke. Their praise of the vigilant citizen has been taken out of context and set against Locke's supposed unconcern for public virtue and his preoccupation with the rights of the individual, including the right to the unimpeded pursuit of wealth.²⁹ However, it is not just that those historians who have done more than merely selectively read the *Letters* have failed to note their

²⁹See J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 177.

Lockean content, indeed it would be almost impossible to do so, but that they have chosen to disregard it as irrelevant:

The skeleton of their political thought [that of Trenchard and Gordon] was Lockean - concerned with inalienable rights and the contract theory of government - but only the skeleton. The flesh, the substance, the major preoccupations and the underlying motivations and mood, were quite different, as was, of course, the level of discourse.³⁰

Pocock has also contended that 'There is no very profound contradiction in the occasional presence of Lockean or Hobbesian elements in the vocabulary of John Trenchard or Thomas Gordon'.³¹ The point is, however, a profound contradiction does exist between Pocock's civic humanist interpretation and the 'significant' presence of Lockean and Hobbesian elements in what is for him a keynote text for his thesis. To dismiss these elements as 'occasional' is not merely a startling understatement, it is a misinterpretation.

Whilst the Lockean presence in *Cato's Letters* may be inconvenient it can hardly be dismissed as largely irrelevant, since it forms the backbone of the *Letters* and therefore is crucial to any attempt to identify their meaning. On the other hand, some of the matter used to flesh out Trenchard and Gordon's arguments in defence of man's natural rights is rhetorical padding. Its purpose was to add more weight to their arguments, as a healthy display of virtue in politics is almost always designed to do, but virtue was not crucial, in the view of Trenchard and Gordon, to the functioning of political life. However, to concede that Lockean principles are

³⁰*The Origins of American Politics*, p. 41.

³¹J.G.A. Pocock, 'Radical Criticism of the Whig Order in the Age between Revolutions', in *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*, ed. Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 33-57, at p. 38.

central to *Cato's Letters* would contradict a civic humanist paradigm which insists on the elision of Locke and the imposition of a Court-Country dichotomy:

The ideology of opposition was moral and neo-classicist in its arguments and assumptions, and had little if anything to do with the debate between Locke and Filmer.³²

What is richly ironic, however, is that those who wish to deny the significance of Locke as a political theorist - whether or not this is in order to refute a Marxist analysis which would seize on him as the standard-bearer of a rising bourgeoisie - substitute in his place the civic humanist 'Cato'. Yet a faithful rendering of *Cato's Letters* shows Trenchard and Gordon to be more 'Lockean' than Locke, in as much as they are less ambiguous in their endorsement of the principle that the rights of the property owning individual are paramount. Less cautious, or pious, than Locke, their language and meaning are unobfuscated by theistic scruple, allowing them unequivocally to present the individual as effectively a free agent owing nothing to society except obedience to just laws, that is those which safeguard his person and his property and are the *raison d'être* of government. Indeed if one wanted a bogey to frighten proponents of the civic humanist interpretation of the eighteenth century a more impressive candidate than 'Cato' could hardly be found. For where Locke proved too tentative for Trenchard and Gordon, they were able to draw on Hobbes to supply the materialist base for their political creed.³³

The question of whether or not Trenchard and Gordon were directly influenced by Locke's political theory is not of paramount importance here. For whilst it is

³² *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 176.

³³ Their analysis of power followed that of Hobbes and, like Dutch republicans, they co-opted Hobbes' arguments to suit their own political views. See chapter 3 of this thesis.

generally accepted that Locke's contract and resistance theories were not utilised by first generation supporters of the 1688 Revolution, by 1720 principles now associated with Locke had become popularised in works such as the anonymous *Political aphorisms* and views at least as radical as those of Locke could be found in Sidney's *Discourses concerning Government*, a number of extended quotes from which are found in *Cato's Letters*.³⁴

Yet it is undoubtedly the case that Gordon at least knew both Locke's philosophical and political works and it seems inconceivable that Trenchard, an habitu   of the Grecian Tavern and member of the self-styled 'college' of radical Whigs who assembled there, would have been a stranger to his texts. In *The Humourist*, Gordon has his fictionalised author recall a dissolute youth spent at Oxford, a Tory bastion, and the Pauline conversion he underwent there:

I lived in this manner for two Years, and then getting acquainted with a sensible Fellow of the *Constitution-Club*, he lent me, and persuaded me to read, LOCKE *upon Human Understanding*, and *upon Government*, with his *Letters concerning Toleration*. The strong Reason, and invincible Truth, which run thro' these Books, made such strange and sudden Impression upon me, that I became like one awakened out of a ridiculous and turbulent Dream, into the Exercise of his Sense and Understanding; I grew, all of a sudden, sober and studious, which rendered me presently suspected to the university of ill Principles; besides, the above-mentioned Books were found in my Room, which confirmed me an Apostate from the Principles of the Place.³⁵

It would seem evident, however, that no matter its provenance, the language of natural rights is a prominent feature of *Cato's Letters*. Trenchard and Gordon's constant mantra was that government was an institution created solely to protect

³⁴It has been argued that the *Political aphorisms* played a significant role in terms of the dissemination of Revolution Principles. See Richard Ashcraft and M.M. Goldsmith, 'Locke,

and enforce man's inalienable rights, that is, to safeguard his person and property, and they repeatedly stressed the limits of government:

All men are born free; liberty is a gift which they receive from God himself; nor can they alienate the same by consent, though possibly they may forfeit it by crimes. No man has power over his own life, or to dispose of his own religion; and cannot consequently transfer the power of either to any body else: Much less can he give away the lives and liberties, religion or acquired property of his posterity, who will be born as free as he himself was born, and can never be bound by his wicked and ridiculous bargain.

The right of the magistrate arises only from the right of private men to defend themselves, to repel injuries, and to punish those who commit them: That right being conveyed by the society to their publick representative, he can executive the same no further than the benefit and security of that society requires he should. When he exceeds his commission, his acts are as extrajudicial as are those of any private officer usurping an unlawful authority, that is, they are void; and every man is answerable for the wrong which he does. A power to do good can never become a warrant for doing evil.³⁶

Governments which failed to serve the good of society were illegitimate, Trenchard and Gordon argued, and men had not just a right but a duty to offer resistance when their natural rights were violated.³⁷

Ronald Hamowy has stressed this Lockean element of *Cato's Letters*. Arguing against Pocock, he insists that of all the writings accountable for transmitting and

Revolution Principles, and the Formation of Whig Ideology', *The Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), 773-800.

³⁵ Thomas Gordon, 'An Account of the Author', *The Humourist*, 2 vols. (London, 1724), I, p. 6.

³⁶ *CL*, I, no. 59, pp. 406-7. Also: 'The entering into political society, is so far from a departure from his natural right, that to preserve it was the sole reason why men did so; and mutual protection and assistance is the only reasonable purpose of all reasonable societies. To make such protection practicable, magistracy was formed, with power to defend the innocent from violence, and to punish those that offered it; nor can there be any other pretence for magistracy in the world. In order to this good end, the magistrate is entrusted with conducting and applying the united force of the community; and with exacting such a share of every man's property, as is necessary to preserve the whole, and to defend every man and his property from foreign and domestic injuries. These are the boundaries of the power of the magistrate, who deserts his function whenever he breaks them. By the laws of society, he is more limited and restrained than any man amongst them; since, while they are absolutely free in all their actions, which purely concern themselves; all his actions, as a publick person, being for the sake of society, must refer to it, and answer the ends of it.', *ibid.*, I, no. 62, p. 427.

developing the radical Whig thought of Locke and his contemporaries in the Augustan age, *Cato's Letters* stands as the most important.³⁸ However, while his reading of the *Letters* appears to capture Trenchard and Gordon's perspective much more accurately than does that presented by Pocock, it runs the risk of substituting one overweening paradigm for another. Hamowy's aim, it seems, is to reclaim for Locke the pre-eminent position he was once accorded in the history of eighteenth century political thought:

Pocock's contention that Locke contributed nothing to the vocabulary of orthodox Whig thought during most of the eighteenth century must be re-evaluated in light of the Lockean nature of *Cato's Letters*. Certainly the centrality of this work in the Whig canon suggests that radical Whig thought played a more substantial role in shaping the political rhetoric of the period than has recently been conceded. The approval with which the letters were received during the quarter-century after their original publication strongly corroborates the view that the Lockean paradigm had in fact contributed a major force in eighteenth century politics.³⁹

Cato's Letters provides sound ammunition for Hamowy's project but if the text is used in this way much of the complexity of Trenchard and Gordon's work is lost and historical debate is reduced to a shouting match between the proponents of two competing languages: one side trying to prove that the *Letters* are dominated by the voice of civic humanism and the other side trying equally hard to prove the Lockean voice is strongest. Both voices have to be attended to if one is to understand what Trenchard and Gordon were saying. It is not the intention of this thesis, therefore, to argue that Locke should be restored to the commanding position he once occupied in the history of British and American political ideas.

³⁷See *ibid*, I, no. 62, pp. 431-32.

³⁸See *ibid*, I, p. xxxvii.

³⁹R. Hamowy, 'Cato's Letters, John Locke and the Republican Paradigm', *History of Political Thought*, 11 (1990), 273-94, at 294. Perhaps because Hamowy's main concern is to spotlight the Lockean element of *Cato's Letters* he tends to ignore the pervasive presence of Hobbes in Trenchard and Gordon's work.

Rather, it is to suggest that the imposition of a single dogmatic reading on a dialogue which employs other vocabularies besides that of neo-Harringtonianism does a disservice both to the complexity of eighteenth thought and to a contemporary understanding of it.

In two recent studies Michael Zuckert has sought to maintain that Locke was the inspiration for the natural rights philosophy that informed American political thought.⁴⁰ *Cato's Letters* figures in his analysis as a bridge between the seeming competing liberal-contractarian and republican traditions. He argues that Trenchard and Gordon fused into a coherent whole two lines of thought that had proceeded previously in partial independence – Whig political science and Lockean political philosophy.⁴¹ ‘Cato’, he claims, was both a republican and an adherent to the Lockean principles later incorporated into the Declaration of Independence. However he rejects Pocock’s characterisation of ‘Cato’ has committed to republican concepts of the public good, a participatory ideal of citizenship and selfless virtue. Instead, he presents ‘Cato’s’ republicanism as incorporating specific components of oppositional ideology, such as condemnation of standing armies, ministerial corruption and subversion of a mixed and balanced constitution. This analysis is valuable but it is also flawed. Zuckert is right in placing Trenchard and Gordon in the natural law tradition, as he is in arguing that the relationship of their political philosophy to traditional Whig ideology has been misunderstood.⁴²

⁴⁰See Michael Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and *The Natural Rights Republic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).

⁴¹*Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, p. xix.

⁴²‘Cato’s political science does have much to do with the older Whig political science of Shaftesbury, Sidney, Marvell, and others, including Machiavelli and Harrington, who must be freed

However, Zuckert's analysis fails to take account of the subtleties of Trenchard and Gordon's thought. He does not examine how their religious beliefs and broader philosophical views, beyond Locke, informed their 'opposition' to Walpole. Once these aspects of their thought are understood it becomes apparent that their republicanism was not constituted by an opposition to standing armies and ministerial corruption but by a commitment to religious toleration and by a lack of confidence in man's capacity for true virtue. Only in a commercial republic, they argued, could men's passions be channelled so as to safeguard their rights.⁴³

Pocock's reading of *Cato's Letters* has also come under attack from another front. Recently Marie McMahon has argued, with much justification, that insufficient weight has been given to Trenchard and Gordon as Whig writers, that 'the "Whig" behind "Independent" and "Establishment" is much larger and more rooted in the political struggle between Whigs and Tories than the Country-versus-Court analysis holds.'⁴⁴ Her work provides an overview of the extensive secondary literature on the period from the Restoration up to the mid-eighteenth century, with the aim of demonstrating the endurance of providential and legitimist doctrines after the Glorious Revolution and the political strength and ideological vitality of the Tories after 1714. This allows her to argue that *Cato's Letters* should be read as a response to a genuine fear, whether valid or not, of 'High-Church counterreformation and High-Tory counterrevolution', reinforcing Caroline

from the Pocockian civic humanist interpretation if their relation to Cato is to be clear.', *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, p. 313.

⁴³See chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁴⁴Marie McMahon, *The Radical Whigs, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), p. 5.

Robbins' view of Trenchard and Gordon as radical Whigs staunchly committed to Revolution Principles.⁴⁵

Despite some reservations, in general this thesis is in agreement with the main thrust of McMahon's argument. However, as will be clear from what has been said above of her work, a large part of it is taken up with tracing, by reference to recent scholarship, the persistence of the Tory/Whig divide from the Exclusion Crisis through to the 1720s. In contrast, the object of this thesis is to look in depth at the relationship between Trenchard and Gordon's political, religious and philosophical beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs resemble those of another 'independent Whig', Bernard Mandeville. Nevertheless, McMahon's work is valuable for the challenge it delivers to the image of Trenchard and Gordon as 'Country' opposition writers.

Indeed what is surprising is that so many historians have accepted the conventional judgement that the main preoccupation of *Cato's Letters* is ministerial corruption. Although the South Sea scandal provided the impetus for the *Letters*, Trenchard and Gordon swiftly moved on to the wider issue of civil and religious liberty, both of which they believed could only be guaranteed under a Whig government.⁴⁶ The *Letters*, in similar vein to the *Independent Whig*, are vehemently anti-clerical and forthright in their support of freedom of conscience. Trenchard and Gordon's preoccupation with these subjects indicates that their overriding concern was not

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁶Of 144 letters, including six additional letters written by Gordon after Trenchard's death, 12 deal in detail with the financial and political fall-out of the South Sea Company crash and a number of others touch in passing on the Company's directors and the measures taken by parliament to pursue them.

liberty in the civic humanist sense but liberty of conscience - because for both them and their contemporaries religious and political ideology were inextricably linked. The presence of the language of civic humanism in *Cato's Letters* obviously can not be ignored but it needs to be re-evaluated and placed in context, both in terms of the *Letters* as a whole and Trenchard and Gordon's other works and also in terms of the party politics of the day and the writings of their contemporaries.

Chapter II

The Character of Two Independent Whigs

Most historians, despite differences of perspective, have tended to regard *Cato's Letters* as representative of what has been termed a 'Country ideology' and the dominant axis along which the political landscape of the period is seen to have been divided is that of Court and Country. Pocock has argued that the 'Whig canon' of commonwealthmen, traced by Caroline Robbins and which includes the *Letters'* authors, Trenchard and Gordon, 'can often better be understood in a Court-Country context than in a Tory-Whig or a Whig official-Whig intellectual one.'¹ And he has characterised *Cato's Letters* and Bolingbroke's writings as 'constituting a country campaign, a polemic designed to drive Walpole from power by mobilising a "public opinion"'.² Alternatively, whilst Isaac Kramnick, writing from a different standpoint, has conceded that Trenchard and Gordon's adherence to the principles of Lockean political philosophy distinguishes them from Bolingbroke, he claims: 'In all that Cato had to say of the new age, he spoke with the same voice as Bolingbroke's Opposition.'³ It is an assertion which illustrates a common misconception, that because Bolingbroke or other Country writers spoke a language also employed by Trenchard and Gordon, that of 'civic humanism', the *lingua franca* of political discourse of the period, that what they have to say is the

¹J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time*, (London, Methuen & Co., 1972), pp. 107-8. See also J.G.A. Pocock, 'Authority and Property: The Question of Liberal Origins', in *After the Reformation*, ed. Barbara C. Malament (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 331-354: 'It is clear ... that Locke played no predominant role in the formation of what Caroline Robbins has called "the Whig canon" in the tradition of the eighteenth-century commonwealthmen.' That group of middle and late seventeenth-century writers, and the Tories as well as Whigs of the second critical period who singled them out for canonization, are defined by their relation to the classical republican tradition, with which Locke had little if anything to do. They took a "country" as opposed to a "court" view of the ideal of the balanced constitution', p. 345.

²*Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 467, 472.

same. Yet a close reading of the *Letters* elicits a very different response to questions of political theory and political practice than to that articulated by Bolingbroke, one accentuated more by Whig than by Country concerns. This is not to downplay the validity of the Court and Country polarity but to argue that a preoccupation with it has tended in the case of *Cato's Letters* to obscure a more fundamental divide between Whig and Tory.⁴ Central to this division, and one obscured by historians who adopt the Court/Country analysis, was the issue of religious toleration, which had remained undiminished in force since the drawing up of battle lines by the precursor Whig and Tory parties of the Restoration. As one critic of the Court/Country analysis has argued, the attempt to forge a 'Country' ideology was itself a political gambit, aimed at papering over party differences, and despite common ground on issues such as standing armies the profound and lasting ideological antipathies between Tories and Whigs over

³*Bolingbroke and His Circle*, p. 248.

⁴There is no doubt that in the latter part of the seventeenth century and in the first decades of the eighteenth century men continued to use the distinctions 'Court' and 'Country', terms which predated the Civil War. It is questionable, however, whether this division reflects accurately the major issues of the day that divided men. As Frank O'Gorman has maintained: 'There was a Country platform, but there was no Country party in the early Hanoverian period ... the hypothesis that early Hanoverian politics was dominated by these distinctions cannot be accepted. The basic structural polarity of politics in this period remained that between Whig and Tory.', Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 143. D. Hayton, a parliamentary historian, has argued: 'Although the area of the Country interest on any pattern of polarities can still be mapped out, it may be better to treat "Court and Country" separately from "Whig and Tory", as something quite different: "another level of political consciousness" has been one suggested [by Frank O'Gorman, *The Rise of Party in England*]. Certainly in this period [1689-c.1720] "Court and Country" ceased to represent a [standing] political division. A Country party manifested itself from time to time, the Country party did not have a continuous existence. Whigs and Tories co-operated in Parliament on Country measures, at elections sometimes, on a Country platform – but they did not lose their identity. They still remained Whigs and Tories first and foremost.' See D. Hayton, 'The "Country" interest and the party system, 1689-c.1720', in *Party and Management 1660-1784*, ed. Clyne Jones (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), pp. 37-85, at p. 65. See also Eveline Cruickshanks, 'The Political Management of Sir Robert Walpole 1720-42', in *Britain in the Age of Walpole*, ed. Jeremy Black (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 23-68: 'In examining the parliamentary Opposition at this time a court-country dichotomy should be discounted ... There was indeed a 'country platform' based on reducing the number of placement and pensioners and curbing electoral corruption, but there was no country party.', p. 32.

religious and dynastic issues, exacerbated after 1714, prevented them from cementing an effective union either ideologically or tactically.⁵

Pocock and others who support the Court/Country thesis base it on the paradigm established by historians such as J.H. Plumb, of an 'age of party' succeeded by an 'age of oligarchy' following the Tory defeat and exclusion from office in 1714.⁶ After that date, they argue, the polarity shifted from that of Tory versus Whig to that of Court versus Country. However, the Court/Country analysis received a grave blow to its credibility in 1970 with the publication of volumes of the *History of Parliament* covering the years 1715-54. These volumes, edited by Romney Sedgwick, show the survival of the Tory parliamentary party after 1714 and indicate that dynastic and religious questions, left unresolved since the 1688 Revolution, remained the key issues dividing the two parties. The work of other historians, including Eveline Cruickshanks and Linda Colley, B.W. Hill and J.C.D. Clark, have added weight to the growing evidence of the persistence of the Tory party after 1714 and the endurance of providential and legitimist doctrines.⁷

⁵See J.C.D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 114. Clark remains unpersuaded by Pocock's contention that England and its American colonies spoke with a 'humanist and Machiavellian vocabulary' after 1688 and that political issues increasingly revolved around the secular concepts of credit and commerce, virtue and corruption. In place of Pocock's analysis he offers, convincingly it would seem, an alternative model, one with which broadly this thesis concurs, of a society preoccupied with religion. See *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 423.

⁶In J.H. Plumb's classic work, *The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725* (London: Macmillan, 1967) he suggested that between 1689 and 1714 the Tory/Whig division prevailed, fuelled by the growth of an active electorate. After 1714, the diminution and close control of the electorate and the prohibition of a political opposition meant that Tory/Whig party politics came to an end, replaced by a Court versus Country alignment. Similarly, A.J. Foord's *His Majesty's Opposition 1714-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) sees the years after 1714 as a period of stability, with an absence of religious conflict. Pocock claims 'it was J.H. Plumb's remodelling of the patterns of English political history, in *The Growth of Political Stability in England* ...which provided the setting in which the Whig regime and the English and American oppositions to it became properly intelligible.', *The Machiavellian Moment Revisited*, 50.

⁷Linda Colley ascribes the survival of the Tory party to effective organisation at Westminster and in the constituencies. Unlike Cruickshanks, she does not believe proscription of the Tory party drove

Outside parliament, from the 1690s into the first two decades of the eighteenth century, struggles between the Lower and Upper Houses of Convocation testified to the Whiggish politics of most of the bishops and to the Tory sympathies of the lesser clergy. These tensions meant that Whig fears of a Jacobite threat, whether real or imaginary, kept alive the two party division up until 1745. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century the fundamental political division remained that of Tory and Whig rather than Court and Country and, moreover, the bearing of religion on political ideology was of significant importance.

The political basis of Trenchard and Gordon's anti-clericalism was spelt out in both *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters*. In *The Character of an Independent Whig*, the pamphlet which inaugurated the weekly *Independent Whig*, Gordon set the confrontational tone of subsequent issues, pressing his argument that High Church clergy were politically suspect. They continued to oppose the Revolution Settlement with all their malice and might, he contended, and even those Churchmen who remained silent on the subject, and failed to offer the Revolution their vocal support, were enemies to the cause: 'So true is it that *they who are not for us, are against us.*'⁸ The 1721 edition of the collected numbers of *The Independent Whig* was addressed to the Lower House of Convocation and accused its members of seeking to place themselves above the civil government. Trenchard argued the English clergy had no jurisdiction, power or authority that

its members to become Jacobites. Hill and, to a greater extent, Clark and others, such as Jeremy Black, argue forcibly that important matters of principle continued to divide Whigs and Tories for much of the eighteenth century. See Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Eveline Cruickshanks, *Political Untouchables: The Tories and the '45* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1979); J.C.D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion and English Society 1688-1832*; B.W. Hill, *The Growth of Parliamentary Parties 1689-1742* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976); and Jeremy Black, ed., *Britain in the Age of Walpole*.

was not derived from parliament. Contrasting the actions of High Churchmen with those of Low Churchmen, he railed that the former had always shown enmity to the Reformation and the latter had consistently supported loyal measures.⁹ The High Church clergy, like the clergy of the Church of Rome, were seen by both Trenchard and Gordon as a pillar and chief support of absolute monarchy: 'Crown'd Heads always thought it their Interest to keep Measures with [High Church clergy], Ministers of State are not able to Trick successfully, and play the Knave, without their leave and Assistance'.¹⁰ Trenchard presented the relationship as a conspiracy to oppress the people: a conspiracy in which the co-conspirators claimed authority on the basis of a 'divine commission'.

In two papers Trenchard compared and ridiculed the doctrines of divine right and the 'indelible character' claimed by some clergy, which rested on the doctrine of apostolic succession, implying that these doctrines were analogous and mutually reinforcing. Absolute monarchs and clergy who claimed an 'indelible character' had a shared interest in keeping the people in ignorance and in awe of them, the 'sacred' authority of one lending weight to the 'sacred' authority of the other.¹¹

⁸Thomas Gordon, *The Character of an Independent Whig* (London, 1719), p. 30.

⁹See nos. 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of *The Independent Whig*. The titles of these numbers illustrate that politics and religion were intimately bound together: 'Of Uninterrupted Succession', 'The Absurdity and Impossibility of Church Power as Independent of the State', 'The Church Proved a Creature of Civil Power by Acts of Parliament and the Oaths of the Clergy', 'The Clergy Proved to be Creations of the Civil Power by the Canons and Their Own Public Acts'.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹¹It is hard not to see an implied parallel between Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, exiled after discovery of the conspiracy initiated by him, and the Pretender. Trenchard thundered that despite Atterbury's banishment and his being deprived of his bishopric, the 'indelible character' bestowed on him when he was installed as bishop meant that he was deemed to remain 'a bishop of the Universal Church', as the Pretender was deemed by Jacobites to remain the true king of England. See *CL*, II, no. 135, p. 932.

The linkage between the two doctrines is made clear in an ironic letter, from a supposed Nonjuror, in a pro-government paper of the day:

I am a *Nonjuror*, and have always been told, that as in Religion an uninterrupted Succession of Bishops was absolutely necessary, and the most infallible Mark of Orthodoxy; so in Politicks, that a Lineal Descent was the only and sufficient Reason for our Obedience to Princes...¹²

As J.A.I. Champion has argued, during this period 'Debates about the nature of monarchical sovereignty necessarily intersected with discussions about the competence and independence of the Church ... To define the sacerdotal competence of the priest in a certain manner held implications for conceptions of civil authority. To argue for one form of Church government was to negate the legitimacy of a related form of civil administration. There was no conceptual separation between issues of Church and state, religion and politics.'¹³

This seamless connection between religion and politics is evident in Gordon's attack on charity schools. The charity school movement had become an arena where party differences were fought out and where the spoils at stake included the malleable minds of the young. Although the establishment of both Anglican and Dissenting charity schools in the late seventeenth century represented a common line of defence, in response to the founding of Jesuit schools in 1685, this united front gradually broke down.¹⁴ Under Anne's reign, a period during which the High

¹²*The Briton*, 30 October 1723. *The Briton* was merely restating a common dictum when it asserted 'What judicious Protestant does not know, that their Non-conformity is at least as much *Political* as *Religious*, if not more?', 18 August 1723. The author of *The Briton* is uncertain but its witty, irreverent style, attacks on Jacobitism, backhanded defence of Walpole's ministry and insistence that self-interest governs the world reads very like Gordon.

¹³J.A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 6.

¹⁴For the background to the charity school movement see M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1964).

Church party gained ground, mutual suspicion and jealousy gave way to open hostility. A High Church campaign drained support from Dissenting schools and led to a decrease in their number, a decline hastened by the passage of the Act against Occasional Conformity of 1711 and the Schism Act of 1714. The resulting capture of the movement by the High Church party inevitably led to accusations that the schools had become seminaries of disaffection, nurturing fresh generations of Jacobites and papists. In his savage criticism of the schools Gordon claimed that they threatened to undo the work of the Revolution, that their governors and those who had management of them were 'for the most part, staunch Jacobites, or, in other words, furious high churchmen'. The schoolmasters were similarly portrayed as enemies to the establishment, seditious conspirators who engaged 'the parents and friends of the children in the interests of a popish Pretender, and breed up the children themselves to fight his battles in due time.'¹⁵ Gordon's fears, whilst exaggerated, were not entirely baseless. Charity school children had been drawn into the country-wide riots of 1715, reminiscent in their intensity of the violent anti-Whig demonstrations which followed the Sacheverell trial in 1710, and for more recent evidence of the danger of Jacobitism Gordon had only to look to the previous year, 1722, and the Atterbury plot.

Champion has rightly observed that in stressing their debt to the classical republican tradition, the preoccupation of 'radicals' with religious affairs has been sidestepped by historians. He appears incorrect, however, in arguing that republicans such as Trenchard and Gordon extended the parameters of traditional ecclesiological debate from discussing rival claims of conflicting *imperium* and

sacerdotium to a fusion of state and religion, embodied in the classical idea of *religio* or civil religion. Their immediate aim, he argues, was not a Lockean ambition of separation of the Church from the state. They believed in the necessity of the Church.¹⁶ This may have been true of some ‘radicals’, perhaps of Walter Moyle, but it was certainly not true of Trenchard and Gordon. They had little faith that religion could make men virtuous and they, unlike most men of the period, believed that even atheists could be good men and good citizens. Gordon was quite emphatic that nothing but a total separation of the Church from the state could ensure civil and religious freedom:

Civil and Religious Liberty are certain Signs of each other, and live and die together; but I believe I may lay it down for a maxim, *that in any Country where there is ne’er a Separatist from the Church, there is ne’er a Freeman in the state.*¹⁷

A civil religion, in the Roman model, may have implied toleration, as under Numa, but it could also be seen as an unwarranted intrusion into matters which did not concern the state. Anthony Collins, writing in *The Independent Whig*, criticised the idea of a civil religion, arguing that it was morally wrong for magistrates to legislate in matters of religion. Echoing Locke, he argued that to do so took away ‘Men’s Right to follow their Consciences therein; which constitutes the very Essence of Religion’.¹⁸

¹⁵CL, II, no. 133, p. 925.

¹⁶See *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, pp. 171, 173, 230.

¹⁷*The Independent Whig*, no. 36, p. 228.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 269. See also Locke, ‘A Letter Concerning Toleration’ and ‘A Second Letter Concerning Toleration’, *Letters Concerning Toleration* (London, 1765), pp. 36, 115-16. Trenchard and Gordon, like Collins, would have taken issue with Hobbes’ denial of religious freedom to Dissenters. See *The Independent Whig*, p. 109.

Nor did Trenchard and Gordon subscribe to the hierarchical epistemology which Champion sees as central to the idea of civil theology, distinguishing between a commonly accepted popular religion and a 'true' set of propositions that only a community of wise men could grasp. Unlike other 'radicals', they had little confidence in man's ability to be ruled by reason. They celebrated reason in opposition to superstition and in the limited sense of man's ability to determine what was best for himself but they had no illusions that man could arrive at real 'truths' in matters such as religion, which were beyond his comprehension. Like Locke, they held that this very inability on the part of man to understand 'truth' was an argument in favour of toleration, as was the fact that men were at least as likely to differ in their religious beliefs as they were in matters that came within the compass of their senses. However, even if man was incapable of discovering truth, Trenchard and Gordon recognised that the desire to search for it was natural to man and, they believed, he should be allowed to carry out his search free from persecution, as Gordon argued: 'He who, in the Search of Truth, does all that he can, does as much as he ought. God requires no more.'¹⁹

Although Trenchard and Gordon denied being opposed to the established Church they, like many others, still regarded it as a refuge for Jacobite sympathisers and crypto-Catholics. Its hierarchical structure and the powers it claimed for its clergy resembled too closely those of the Roman Church to allow it to escape suspicion and the common perception was that papacy and arbitrary government went hand in hand. Both were oppressive institutions, they argued, which used a fog of

mysticism to cloud men's minds, relying on the doctrines of an uninterrupted apostolic succession and divine right to awe uninformed and untrained minds and maintain them in submission. The titles, privileges and '*indelible* character', or cloak of spiritual authority, assumed by Catholic and High Church clergy were contrived to persuade men that they should allow others to do their thinking for them; to leave the direction of their beliefs to those divinely ordained to guide them.²⁰

The aim of the *Letters*, as stated in Gordon's preface, was to rouse men from this mental lethargy and make them think for themselves. It is a sentiment which echoes the anti-clericalism of Locke's *Two Treatises*, and one also, of course, found in the writing of contemporaries such as Marvell as well as in popularisations of Locke's work.²¹ As already noted, Trenchard and Gordon both appear familiar with the *Two Treatises*, whether directly or indirectly. And, like Locke, they believed the sole end of government to be the preservation of man's property, both in his person and in his goods. The function of government, they held, was to protect men from the injuries of one another and not to direct them in their private affairs. Intervention should be kept to a minimum. As Gordon enquired:

Must the magistrate tie up every man's legs, because some men fall into ditches? Or, must he put out their eyes, because with them they see lying

¹⁹*The Independent Whig*, no. 24, p. 159; also nos. 28 and 36, pp. 179 and 226. Also see Locke, 'A Fourth Letter for Toleration' and 'A Third Letter for Toleration', *Letters Concerning Toleration*, pp. 388-90, 266.

²⁰*CL*, II, nos. 135 and 136.

²¹In 'John Locke and Anglican Royalism', *Political Studies*, 31 (1983) 61-85, Mark Goldie argues that one of the major concerns reflected in Locke's work was a belief that the Anglican establishment was not merely an adjunct to the monarchy but aspired to an extension of temporal power.

vanities? Or, would it become the wisdom and care of governors to establish a travelling society, to prevent people, by a proper confinement, from throwing themselves into wells, or over precipices; or to endow a fraternity of physicians and surgeons all over the nation, to take care of their subjects' health, without being consulted; and to vomit, bleed, purge, and scarify them at pleasure, whether they would or no, just as these established judges of health should think fit? ... Let people alone, and they will take care of themselves, and do it best; and if they do not, a sufficient punishment will follow their neglect, without the magistrate's interposition and penalties. It is plain, that such busy care and officious intrusion into the personal affairs, or private actions, thoughts, and imaginations of men, has in it more craft than kindness; and is only a device to mislead people, and pick their pockets, under the false pretence of the publick and their private good. To quarrel with any man for his opinions, humours, or the fashion of his clothes, is an offence taken without being given. What is it to a magistrate how I wash my hands, or cut my corns; what fashion or colours I wear, or what notions I entertain, or what gestures I use, or what words I pronounce, when they please me, and do him and my neighbour no hurt? As well may he determine the colour of my hair, and control my shape and features.²²

Applying to both the secular and the religious sphere the Puritan dictum that each man is his own best guide, Gordon declared: 'I know no man so fit as himself to rule himself, in things which purely concern himself.'²³ This sphere of autonomy extended to the pursuit of wealth and, he argued, man had a right to engage unimpeded in the acquisition and disposal of his property as long as no one else was hurt in the process. In this respect, depredations carried out under the direction or auspices of those to whom authority had been entrusted by the people were as unlawful as any committed by a robber, since the purpose of government was to render property secure:

True and impartial liberty is therefore the right of every man to pursue the natural, reasonable, and religious dictates of his own mind; to think what he will, and act as he thinks, provided he acts not to the prejudice of another; to spending his own money himself, and lay out the produce of his labour his own way; and to labour for his own pleasure and profit, and not for others who are idle, and would live and riot by pillaging and oppressing

²²*CL*, I, no. 62, pp. 428-29.

²³*Ibid.*, I, no. 39, p. 273.

him, and those that are like him. ... To possess, in security, the effects of our industry, is the most powerful and reasonable incitement to be industrious; and to be able to provide for our children, and to leave them all that we have, is the best motive to beget them. But where property is precarious, labour will languish. The privileges of thinking, saying, and doing what we please, and of growing as rich as we can, without any other restriction, than that by all this we hurt not the public, nor one another, are the glorious privileges of liberty; and its effects to live in freedom, plenty, and safety.²⁴

Trenchard and Gordon maintained that far from being destructive of liberty wealth was its chief support. When man was afforded the freedom to accumulate property and enjoy the fruits of his industry he was provided with an overriding motive to defend the constitution, which was the basis of that liberty. Gordon argued that to live securely, happily and independently was the end and effect of liberty and that as no man desired to live under a master 'therefore all men are animated by the passion of acquiring and defending property, because property is the best support of that independency, so passionately desired by all men.'²⁵

Neo-Harringtonianism, Pocock argues, located the citizen's independence, and therefore his capacity for virtue, in his possession of landed property, an independence which was undermined by the unreal world of commerce and paper credit. Yet Trenchard and Gordon made no distinction between landed and mobile property and viewed well regulated public credit as a boon to national prosperity.²⁶ They accepted commerce, and the financial instruments which facilitated it, as the basis of Britain's wealth and greatness. Rather than denouncing the change from

²⁴Ibid., I, no. 62, pp. 429, 432.

²⁵Ibid., I, no. 68, p. 483.

²⁶CL, I, nos. 62 and 4. Elsewhere, in the *St. James's Journal*, October 11 1722, Gordon spoke enthusiastically about the vast benefits which accrued to a nation capable of skilfully managing a public deficit.

old to new forms of property brought about by the financial revolution, Trenchard and Gordon enthusiastically supported the transition. Theirs was a pragmatic analysis which far from rejecting the new economic age applauded the benefits it brought the nation. They did not regard commerce, and the financial instruments necessary to support a flourishing trade, as a 'necessary evil', the foundation of the nation's wealth and greatness but also that which threatened to undermine the whole structure of society.²⁷ Instead they perceived it as an expression of one of the natural rights of man - ranked with freedom of conscience and freedom of speech and intimately bound with both - man's right to acquire and dispose of property free from constraint, except where he prejudiced the equal right of another to believe, speak or act as he pleased.²⁸

What Trenchard and Gordon objected to when they criticised the handling of the South Sea scandal was that government had not allowed a level playing field, in permitting those close to Court to manipulate the market and then escape without punishment. It was not that they were opposed to the market itself but to the government's failure to police it adequately. As realists they argued not for a retreat into a past golden age of virtue, or for experiments in government designed to create a future utopia, but for present vigilance. They wished to mobilise public opinion in order to root out corruption and to create a framework of accountability within which it would fail to thrive again. However, antipathy to Walpole's

²⁷Charles Davenant's description of commerce, 'Balance of Trade', *The Political and Commercial Works of Charles D'Avenant*, 2 vols. (London, 1771), II, p. 255.

²⁸CL, I, no. 64, p. 448. Trade thrived under a free government, Trenchard argued, 'she is the portion of free states, is married to liberty and ever flies the foul and polluted embraces of a tyrant'.

management of the South Sea affair did not make them a friend to the Tory party, despite the attempt by its leaders to forge a Country party consensus.

The proviso that the accumulation of wealth should not entail harm to anyone else, a condition flouted by the directors of the South Sea Company, is the reason Trenchard and Gordon denounced monopolies in commerce. Whilst this stance may seem in contradiction to their defence of free trade, like other opponents of mercantilism of the period their enthusiasm for laissez-faire principles only carried so far, government intervention being deemed necessary in circumstances where the market had become so unbalanced that it could not otherwise be righted. In their opinion a monopoly, wherever it occurred - and whether exercised by a branch of government, a religious denomination or a company - produced the same pernicious effects. It involved the concentration of power in the hands of the few, which was then employed for the benefit of that number in opposition to the interests of the people. The consequence of this was the destabilisation of the whole structure of civil society, as when government denied protection to men's property, either in their person or goods, they no longer had an interest in its preservation:

In fine, monopolies are equally dangerous in trade, in politics, in religion: a free trade, a free government, and a free liberty of conscience, are the rights and the blessings of mankind.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., II, no. 91, p. 653. Ronald Hamowy has also argued that Trenchard and Gordon were not opponents of the new commercial era and the changes it brought it in its wake. He is perhaps mistaken, however, in arguing that the real target of their animus was the government practice of intervention in the marketplace, a suggestion which tends to present 'Cato' as a crusading proponent of laissez-faire economics. As such it is an inaccurate image, as Trenchard and Gordon, like most so-called advocates of free trade of the period, were not wholly consistent in their criticism of government interference in the world of commerce. For them, and other critics of mercantilism, the issue was one of degree. Generally free-traders were in favour of less restrictions in the domestic market but they still expected government to protect national markets from foreign competition.

For both Trenchard and Gordon, as later for Hume, the much vaunted liberty of the ancients was hardly worthy of its name. Liberty in any real sense of the word, that is in relation to men as they are rather than as shaped by a unique set of historical circumstances, was a modern invention. It was the product of a prosperous and refined society, one which had reached an advanced stage of development:

In the first rise and beginning of states, a rough and unhewn virtue, a rude and savage fierceness, and an unpolished passion for liberty, are the qualities chiefly in repute. To these succeed military accomplishments, domestic arts and sciences, and such political knowledge and acquirements, as are necessary to make states great and formidable abroad, and to preserve equality, and domestic happiness, and security, at home. And lastly, when these are attained, follow politeness, speculative knowledge, moral and experimental philosophy, with other branches of learning, and the whole train of the muses.³⁰

Similarly, they subscribed to the Court Whig interpretation of England's history, which relied on the Royalist Robert Brady's account of the nation's progress from feudal despotism to modern liberty. This is in opposition to the neo-Harringtonian reading, which viewed history up to the Glorious Revolution as a trajectory not of progress but of decline. Pocock has argued that Walpole's journalists countered the Country party's appeal to the 'original principles' of the constitution by arguing that liberty in England was modern, not ancient, and that constitutional government had emerged out of feudal disorder.³¹ Yet this is precisely the view of history endorsed by Trenchard and Gordon. Their interpretation of England's history was, like that of Harrington, an indictment rather than a celebration of its feudal past. 'Gothic' government held no charm for them, it was characteristic of a subsistence

Similarly, they also called for government to intervene to prevent the operation of monopolies. For Hamowy's view see 'Cato's Letters, John Locke and the Republican Paradigm', 273-94.

³⁰CL, II, no. 71, p. 514.

³¹See *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 181.

level economy 'where a few have liberty, and all the rest are slaves.'³² Bolingbroke, with whom Trenchard and Gordon are grouped as Country opposition writers, celebrated 'Gothic' liberty, finding it politically expedient to embrace the early Whig neo-Harringtonian analysis, which harked back to a golden age inhabited by a nation of freeholders.³³ In this way he was able to offer himself and those of his party as defenders of age-old freedoms:

A spirit of liberty, transmitted down from our Saxon ancestors, and the unknown ages of our government, preserved itself through one almost continual struggle, against the usurpations of our princes, and the vices of our people ... Let us justify this conduct by persisting in it, and continue to ourselves the peculiar honour of maintaining the freedom of our Gothic institution of government.³⁴

Political rhetoric aside, Bolingbroke and Trenchard and Gordon were not at one in their view of Walpole's ministry not only on grounds of party differences, centring on concerns with religious toleration and arbitrary government, but because their philosophical frameworks differed, reflecting contrary ideological perspectives.³⁵ Bolingbroke's concept of the nature of man and politics was essentially classical and non-egalitarian. The fundamental division he saw running through society was that 'of the multitudes designed to obey, and of the few designed to govern.'³⁶ These few, a natural aristocracy, were qualified to govern because they were motivated not by self-interest, as was the case with the mass of mankind, but by the highest virtue:

³²CL, I, no. 67, p. 473.

³³See 'The Principles and Practice of Opposition: The Case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole'.

³⁴Bolingbroke, 'A Dissertation upon Parties', *Bolingbroke's Political Writings*, ed. Bernard Cottret (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), p. 124.

³⁵It is to be remembered that *Cato's Letters* and *The Craftsman*, the periodical founded by Bolingbroke and Pulteney and the chief weapon in their campaign against Walpole, were not contemporaneous. The *Letters* were brought to a close with Trenchard's death in 1723, although Gordon continued alone for a further six letters until finally signing off on December 7th 1723. The *Craftsman* did not make its appearance until late 1726.

These are they who engross almost the whole reason of the species, who are born to instruct, to guide, and to preserve; who are designed to be the tutors and the guardians of human kind.³⁷

Trenchard and Gordon believed, with Hobbes, that self-preservation was the fundamental law of nature and that men, all men, would always follow their own self-interest, unless persuaded or forced to do otherwise.³⁸ They were emphatic, therefore, about the need to strictly monitor those who governed because, unlike Bolingbroke, they did not expect virtue of them.³⁹ Although both they and Bolingbroke looked to constitutional balance as the means of securing good government, Bolingbroke stressed the need for virtuous governors, an oppositional tactic which distinguished him from Trenchard and Gordon. Contrary to what Pocock has argued, Trenchard and Gordon were not concerned with a politics of morality.⁴⁰ They did not condemn the presence of placemen in parliament per se - they expected a measure of venality in government - but rather they criticised the presence of too many placemen, which would prevent the legislative branch of government from acting as an effective check on the executive:

I would not be understood quite to exclude Parliament-men from having Places; for a Man may serve his Country in two Capacities: but I would not have it to be a Qualification for a Place ... Indeed, tho there may be no great inconvenience in suffering a few Men that have Places to be in that House, such as com[e] in naturally, without any indirect Means, yet it will be fatal to us to have many: for all wise Governments endeavor as much as possible to keep the Legislative and Executive Parts asunder, that they may be a check upon one another.⁴¹

³⁶'A Dissertation upon Parties', p. 132.

³⁷Bolingbroke, 'On the Spirit of Patriotism', *Political Writings*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 193.

³⁸See chapter 3 of this thesis.

³⁹Bolingbroke claimed he differed from Machiavelli in one significant respect: 'he declares the affectation of virtue to be useful to princes: he is so far on my side in the present question. The only difference between us is, I would have the virtue real: he requires no more than the appearance of it.' 'A Patriot King', *Bolingbroke's Political Writings*, p. 63.

⁴⁰See *Machiavellian Moment*, p. 447.

⁴¹John Trenchard, *A Short History of Standing Armies in England* (London, 1698), p. vi.

Bolingbroke's strategy was directed at ousting Walpole's allegedly corrupt ministry and installing himself at the head of a Tory or, if his rhetoric is to be believed, a Country administration. Trenchard and Gordon merely wished to curb the excesses of a party which in fundamental respects was still their natural home but which they believed had compromised its revolutionary principles in pursuit of power.

McMahon argues that Trenchard and Gordon were concerned that by its disregard of public opinion, such as the outrage inspired by its mismanagement of the South Sea scandal, Walpole's ministry would render itself so deeply unpopular with the nation that the door would be opened to Jacobitism.⁴² However, whilst there is much truth in this argument it only tells half the story. Trenchard and Gordon were also much troubled by Walpole's abuse of power and just as they did not wish to see another Stuart as arbitrary governor nor did they wish another tyrant such as Cromwell:

The partizans of Oliver Cromwell, when he was mediating tyranny over the three nations, gave out, that it was the only expedient to balance factions, and to keep out Charles Stuart; and so they did worse things to keep him out, than he could have done if they had let him in.⁴³

Trenchard and Gordon were deeply critical of the fact that once in power establishment Whigs had ignored, and continued to ignore, central tenets of traditional Whig orthodoxy. They contrived at the enlargement of the royal prerogative, countenanced standing armies and failed to forward religious toleration. In *Three Political Letters to a Noble Lord, Concerning Liberty and the Constitution* Gordon catalogued with heavy sarcasm the 'excellent and useful

⁴²See *The Radical Whigs*, p. 170.

⁴³*CL*, II, no. 94, p. 674; see also no. 118, p. 823.

Laws' introduced since the accession of George I and under Walpole's ministry. Recent legislation, of which he observed wryly 'These Laws show the Happiness of such an Administration', included the Riot Act (1715) and suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act (1715).⁴⁴ Measures which were directly opposed to the cherished Whig principles of freedom from arbitrary imprisonment, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

In bracketing Walpole's legislative record with that of a previously compromised Whig administration, Gordon showed that a change in chief minister meant a change in appearance rather than substance. The inference was that a similar lack of Whig principles was apparent in the limited nature of the action taken by Walpole's ministry to bring the South Sea Company directors to justice; men who stood guilty in Trenchard and Gordon's eyes of undermining the constitution by concentrating the nation's property, and therefore power, in the hands of a few. The ridicule heaped on Walpole's trade legislation, presented as useless when not outrightly destructive of commerce, also served to underline Gordon's frustration that since gaining power the Whigs had secured the passage of a number of laws, few of which had addressed the discrimination still suffered by Dissenters. Indeed after the Whig split in 1717 Walpole, who then entered an alliance with the Tories, consistently opposed measures brought forward by Stanhope's ministry which reflected traditional Whig principles, the most significant of these being the bill for the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts in 1719.

⁴⁴Thomas Gordon, *Three Political Letters to a Noble Lord, Concerning Liberty and the Constitution* (London, 1721), p. 17.

After such treatment, Gordon observed, the Dissenters had learned to distrust Walpole, for whilst 'Mr W- was once their great Favourite: They see how he served them.'⁴⁵ It is surprising, therefore, that McMahon asserts that Walpole's ministry possessed the overt support of Trenchard and Gordon because they saw it as the only bulwark against papacy and absolutist government. The two writers, McMahon claims, 'welcome Walpole as the best man to secure the Protestant succession in the House of Hanover.'⁴⁶ It would perhaps be more correct to argue that they regarded him as not the best man but, in the absence of a better, they were prepared to lend him their support in times of crisis. That is why they rushed to the administration's defence in 1722 after the Atterbury plot had been discovered.

At first *Cato's Letters* expressed suspicion that the entire story of a Jacobite plot might have been fabricated by Walpole as a pretext to increase his hold on power. However, as more details of the plot emerged and of those involved, the tone changed and Trenchard and Gordon threw their weight behind Walpole. They voiced their support for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the maintenance of a standing army and the quartering of troops in Hyde Park, and the prosecution of Atterbury by a Bill of Attainder, all measures which ran completely counter to Country principles. Gordon also expressed regret for his past naiveté in failing to recognise that his valid criticisms of government might be taken up by the Tories and used by them to their own advantage. He believed the Tories had capitalised on the public dissatisfaction with the handling of the South Sea scandal, a dissatisfaction fuelled by papers such as *Cato's Letters*, and he feared that his

⁴⁵*The Character of an Independent Whig*, p. 30.

⁴⁶*The Radical Whigs*, p. 91.

words might have helped to create an atmosphere in which Jacobites had felt they stood some chance of success. In marked contrast to those Old Whigs who opposed the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and who voted in parliament in favour of an opposition amendment limiting suspension of the Act to six months, Trenchard and Gordon offered Walpole's ministry their support. This indicates where their priorities lay. They were Whigs first and foremost and were prepared to sacrifice the Country principles attributed to them when necessary. So instead of castigating Walpole, they laid responsibility for the imposition of repressive measures at the door of the Jacobites.

[Jacobites] exclaim against armies and taxes, and are the cause of both, and rail at grievances of their own creating. Who make armies necessary, but they, who would invade, and enslave, or destroy us by armies, foreign popish armies? Who makes taxes necessary, but they, who by daily conspiring against our peace and our property, and against that establishment which secures both, force us to give part to save all? ... What is here said of taxes and armies, may be said of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. They complain of suspension as a heavy evil; and by their incessant plots and rebellions, make long and frequent suspensions inevitable. By their eternal designs and attacks upon us, they force us upon the next means of self-preservation; and then complain of oppression, because we will not suffer them to oppress and destroy us.⁴⁷

Throughout the *Letters*, Trenchard and Gordon made a clear distinction between their own criticism of Walpole's ministry, which was unmotivated by party spite they claimed, and that of the Tories, who attempted to capitalise for their own advantage on every evidence of government corruption or oppression. Both in the *Letters* and in writings produced during the same period by Trenchard and Gordon, some of which are more overtly critical of Walpole, they appear to have found

⁴⁷*CL*, II, no. 125, pp. 867-8, also see no. 129, p. 895. In a subsequent letter, Trenchard asked with indignation 'Can [the High Church clergy] have the forehead to complain of armies, of taxes, or any sort of oppression (however just such complaint may be in others) they who have never shewn

themselves in the difficult position of feeling a duty to offer what, in their eyes, was constructive criticism in the knowledge that in so doing they would almost certainly provide ammunition to a party they believed to be intent on the destruction of the Revolution Settlement. It necessitated a strategy which involved moderating their criticism at times when it appeared disaffected Tories might possess sufficient power to bring down the Whig administration. In a pamphlet written after the discovery of the Atterbury plot, Gordon argued that his writings had been forced into service by Jacobites. In one Jacobite pamphlet, he lamented, 'a great Man [Walpole] who was contriving to save us from Ruin, was exposed to the Rage of the Populace, under the Character of a *Screener of the Guilty*.' Upbraiding himself for his naivety, he continued:

So little indeed was their Design perceived by myself, that I own many things dropped from my Pen, which seemed calculated for the Service of the Faction; and so insensible was I of the projected Insurrection, that I inveighed against the Forces encamped on that Occasion, with the Zeal always shewn by us *Old Whigs* against standing Armies.

Refusing any longer to be used as a cat's paw by Jacobites he told his audience he had had his eyes opened:

By artfully spreading the Poison amongst us, they have made us the loudest in the Clamours rained against the best of Kings, and the wisest of Ministers. But e'er yet it be too late, let us convince them, that we tread in their dangerous Footsteps only whilst we are hood-winked, and that having recovered the Light of Reason, we all unanimously join against the common Enemies of our Country, of our Religion, and of our Liberties.⁴⁸

themselves for any government, but what subsisted by armies and oppression?', *CL*, II, no. 128, pp. 887-8.

⁴⁸Thomas Gordon, *A Short View of the Conspiracy, with some Reflections on the Present State of Affairs. In a Letter to an Old Whig in the Country. By Cato*. (London, 1723), pp. 128-9, 151-2. When the South Sea scandal was at its height Walpole was accused of acting as a 'screen' to protect the guilty. Trenchard and Gordon joined in this accusation. In the preface to the collected *Letters*, Gordon complained: 'It was no matter of wonder that these letters should be ill understood, and

The problem was that Walpole offered such an easy target to all sides. The naturalistic concept of man held by Trenchard and Gordon meant that they, unlike Bolingbroke, believed a measure of corruption was acceptable, indeed inevitable, in a politician. What they objected to was Walpole's reckless excess:

Most Men are willing to allow a great Officer, if he would but carefully cook the Nation's Money, to Lick his own Fingers and thrive upon his Employment. But he who exhausts the Nation for his own Use, is a publick Highwayman and the whole Kingdom should be his Prosecutors.⁴⁹

Before the Atterbury conspiracy rekindled fears of Jacobitism Walpole, whose rampant nepotism suggested dynastic aspirations, appeared the more pressing threat to the constitution:

[O]n Reading the *London Journal*, I could not but observe with pleasure how many of the *W[alpoles]* are in Places of the Greatest Power and Advantage, and rejoyce that one Family is capable of serving the King and Nation, in all these Important Posts. Such a Instance is not often to be seen. Formerly a Prime Minister would think He had done and *deserv'd sufficiently*, if he had brought Three or Four of his Relations into part of the Administration: But now we have a Generation, like the famous *Fabii* in *Rome*, that appear All together in the Defence of their Country ... one Brother in the T[reasur]y, another S[ecretar]y of S[ta]te, and a Third P[ost]-M[aste]r G[enera]l.⁵⁰

After the plot had been uncovered, however, the focus of Trenchard and Gordon's concerns changed and the more pressing need became that of securing the prosecution and punishment of the conspirators. Hence their apparent conversion in spring 1723 to the idea of standing armies and their endorsement of the suspension of civil liberties occurred at a time when a Bill of Pains and Penalties

maliciously applied, by some, who, having no principles of their own, or vile ones, were apt to wrest Cato's papers and principles to favour their own prejudices and base wishes.', *CL*, I, p. 13.

⁴⁹*The Character of an Independent Whig*, p. 20.

⁵⁰*Three Political Letters to a Noble Lord, Concerning Liberty and The Constitution*, pp. 34-5.

against Atterbury was about to be put to the vote in parliament.⁵¹ They would also have been concerned to ensure that the Bill, which called for Atterbury's exile and was successfully carried on 15th May, did not act as the trigger for riot and violence, as had occurred after the Sacheverell trial when Dissenting meeting houses became the focus of attack under the cry of 'the Church in danger'. The Sacheverell experience had shown that for many, Whig and Dissenter were virtually synonymous terms and anger at the prosecution of a High Churchman by an unpopular Whig ministry could be easily channelled into outbreaks of public disorder.

Trenchard and Gordon's defence of the measures taken by Walpole at this time, therefore, should be seen as a response to a period of perceived crisis and not interpreted as evidence of warm support for a Protestant Defender of the Faith, as seems to be suggested by McMahon. Trenchard and Gordon's overriding concern, and the theme which dominates the letters, is the danger of arbitrary power, whether it be exercised by a Protestant or a Catholic governor. Writing after the passage of the Bill of Pains and Penalties against Atterbury, Gordon reminded his readers that Protestant rulers, like any others, could make the same ill use of power:

I could name Protestants who have had impostors of their own as cruel as the Pope, had their power been as great, and their hands as loose ... Protestant rulers have no more right than the Sultan to oppress Protestants ...⁵²

⁵¹G.V. Bennett calls the Bill used against Atterbury a 'dangerously arbitrary procedure' in 'Jacobitism and the Rise of Walpole', in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society in Honour of J.H. Plumb*, pp. 70-92, at p. 89.

⁵²CL, II, no. 131, pp. 907-8.

However, Trenchard and Gordon's distrust of Walpole was overridden by their distrust of the High Church party which, in their eyes, posed a more tangible threat to liberty, as witnessed by the Atterbury plot, than the loss of an antique civic virtue. In *The Independent Whig* Trenchard and Gordon declared their project to be one of reformation. However unlike previous 'seeming Attempts of this Kind' which focused on small faults, such as the luxury of the rich, and therefore were of small service, they meant to attack major defects in the state:

But the greater and more important Mischiefs, which affect Humane Society, have been, for the most Part, left untouch'd by our finest Writers; and Priestcraft and Tyranny have been seldom attacked by any, but rather flattered and supported.⁵³

The real danger that Trenchard and Gordon feared was that posed by priestcraft, which robbed men of their independence of thought and sought to make the state subordinate to the Church. For both men, therefore, when faced with a choice, establishment Whigs, adequately kept within bounds by institutional checks, would always prove preferable to an alliance with Tories of questionable loyalty.⁵⁴ In

⁵³*The Independent Whig*, p. 4. Trenchard and Gordon's programme was not unlike that of Mandeville, who a decade earlier had attacked similar projects. In *The Female Tatler*, a journal which capitalised on the popularity of *The Tatler* and set about puncturing the self-righteous pomposity of Steel's creation, Sir Isaac Bickerstaff, he lampooned the moral crusade undertaken by the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. These societies were set up in the eighteenth century for the purpose of attacking luxury and licentiousness. Trenchard and Gordon, like Mandeville, were not in favour of conventional movements to reform manners. They regarded these matters to be relatively trivial and believed the reforming societies to represent an unwarranted intrusion into men's private lives.

The Tatler, a champion of the Societies, cast itself as the nation's censor and guardian of society's morals, proclaiming: 'The general Purpose of this Papers is to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity and Affectation, and to recommend a general Simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse and our Behaviour.', Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, 4 vols. (London, 1713), I, pp. iv-v. Like Trenchard and Gordon, Mandeville saw the real evils facing the nation as priestcraft and arbitrary rule, exemplified by Louis XIV. See *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church and National Happiness* (London, 1720); *The Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (London, 1732); and *The Virgin Unmask'd* (London, 1709), pp. 80-1.

⁵⁴Trenchard and Gordon would probably have agreed with Hume's judgement that faction founded on interest was more benign and therefore preferable to that founded on principle, associated with religious intolerance. The *Letters* are in part based on the premise that the Whig ministry might be

extremis, with Protestant liberty apparently under threat, it is easy to see where Trenchard and Gordon's priorities lay. So it was that in the wake of an attempted Scottish rebellion and the landing of the Pretender at Peterhead, Trenchard, that staunch Commonwealthman, compromised his commitment to frequent elections by supporting the 1716 Septennial Act, although he subsequently argued, once the crisis was passed, for repeal of the Act. And, as already shown, in the wake of the Atterbury conspiracy he was persuaded to support measures he had consistently condemned in the past.

It is obvious from a reading of *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig*, as well as other works by Trenchard and Gordon, that their major preoccupation was not civic virtue and the threat posed to it by commercial values but religious toleration and the threat posed by High Church Tories. The latter's commitment to the indefeasible right of both kings and clergy evoked the spectre of a return to Catholic rule and therefore, in the eyes of Trenchard and Gordon, religious and state tyranny. A Whig administration, albeit a corrupt one, was at least pledged to safeguard the gains won by the Revolution Settlement and it still offered the best chance of securing a wider toleration through the repeal of the Test Acts, which barred Dissenters from office and placed them under a number of restrictions. That is the reason why Trenchard and Gordon did not consistently oppose Walpole – their position was much more nuanced than that suggested by Pocock. They should be seen as critics of the Whig order, certainly, but ones who wanted to see that order preserved rather than destroyed and replaced by Tory rule.

brought to see that its long term interest lay in securing the happiness of the people. Jacobites and High Church Tories, however, blind to reason, were capable of ruining the country in defence of the

Trenchard's priorities are evident in a pamphlet he wrote before the 1722 election, in which he set out his advice to electors on the issues that he believed should decide their votes:

In the first and chief Place, you should promote the Interest of those who are true Friends to his Majesty King *George, as by Law established*, in his royal House ... So you should fix your Eyes on those, *who have shewn a particular Regard to the Protestant Succession, when most in Danger.*⁵⁵

The next thing to consider, he urged, was 'your *Religion and Liberties*'. The inference was that only in Whig hands were all of these secure, even if the hands of a few were rather tarnished. Walpole's ministry may have failed in its duty as steward of the public finances but it remained the best, or only, guardian of the nation's liberties. Corruption, the watchword of civic humanism, hardly figured as an election issue. It should not go uncensured but it made little sense to bar the door to a thief, especially when one could place all valuables out of his reach, only to allow in a murderer who would take one's lifeblood - liberty. Moreover, he argued, those Tories clamouring most loudly against corruption had themselves been the worst offenders when their party had held power and now, denied office, they would have people take their lack of opportunity for virtue:

[Another consideration is] *our late Misfortunes in relation to the wicked Management of the South-Sea Scheme*; though in my own Opinion I cannot think it so important as the others which I have offered to you. You cannot be ignorant how this has been made use of by designing men, and how it has misled many well-meaning People; and here Gentlemen, be not over-hasty in your Censures on this Head. Consider, in the first Place, that all Men are liable to Mistakes, that there may be such a Thing in the World as involuntary Error, that Men may design very well, and the Consequences be

principle of divine right or the independence of the Church.

⁵⁵John Trenchard, 'Seasonable Advice to the Electors of Great Britain; with a Word or two relating to the Influence of the Clergy in Elections' [originally published 1722], *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon*, 2 vols. (London, 1751), I, p. 273.

very bad. I would not be here understood, that I am vindicating any who designed to plunder us, or was in the Bottom of that *Mystery of Iniquity*. No, I would only set Matters right: Allowing, therefore, that two, or three, or more, should have been Plunderers, for God's Sake don't think a whole Community, or Party is guilty, don't condemn a whole Administration for the Sake of a few who have corrupted themselves ... let not designing Men guide you to work your own Ruin, and though we were in as bad a Condition as they would represent (which thank God is not our Case) yet let us take Care not to trust those now, that we have formerly (for very good Reasons) opposed; for, can we think the Enemies of our Country are altered, or have they changed their Sentiments and Cause ... Have we forgot their known maxim, *That no Government is worth serving without Jobs?* Why then should we trust such, and think those now the only disinterested Men, who when in Power, have been the most wicked and corrupt of any in the World?⁵⁶

Warning against ridding the nation of one band of robbers only to allow in greater ones to take their place, he implored electors that they:

[T]hink of the Men, who, though they have taken the Oaths to the King, yet think they owe him no Duty; who have abjured the Pretender, but not forgot him; who perhaps never engaged in any Rebellion or Invasion, yet either in Words, pleasing Looks, or finally, by an avowed Silence, aided or wished well to a Popish Pretender: when the Cause of the King, the Protestant Religion, and the Liberties of England were in Danger. These are the Persons that when they have it in their Power, will plunder your Liberties, and these are the Plunderers you ought most to fear and despise ... Let those who'd enslave you know you may have lost your money but have resolved not to part with your souls nor lose your Liberties.⁵⁷

He also cautioned against being swayed by priests, well aware of the Tory party's standing with the lower clergy and its ability to canvass support from the pulpit.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 274-5.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 275. In the same work, Trenchard commended another pamphlet, written by his colleague, to the attention of his readers. Gordon, who did not enjoy the same standing as Trenchard, could be counted upon to express himself more robustly: 'A *Tory* is a Monster, with *English Face*, a *Popish Heart*, and an *Irish Conscience* ... [Tories] are a Sort of wild Boars, that would fain root out the Constitution, and break the Balance of our happy Government, by rendering that *despotic* which is *established, and bounded by Law* ... In a Word, a *Tory*, is a Tool of Rome, an Emissary of the *Pretender's*, a Friend to *Priestcraft*, an *Enemy to his King and Country*, and an Underminer of our happy Constitution, both in Church and State', Thomas Gordon, 'The True Picture of a Modern Tory; or a High-Churchman painted to the Life' [originally published 1722], *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon*, pp. 278-80.

Finally, he played on the popular association of the Tory party with the landed interest:

It is highly necessary that all Places, who send Representatives to Parliament, should fix on such Persons, who either know, or are interested in Trade and Commerce; and as we depend on Trade for our chief Support, so none can be better Judges who is fit to represent them, than the Inhabitants themselves.⁵⁸

Trenchard's message to the electorate was unequivocal; the moral character of their governors was relatively unimportant. Of crucial importance, however, was that they should not hand over power to a party that once possessed of the reins of government would overturn the advantages won by the Revolution Settlement and extinguish political and religious liberties.

Trenchard not only offered advice to electors. In 1722 he also offered himself for election as the member for Taunton in Somerset. He won the seat but did not hold it long, dying the following year. It was not the first time he had attempted to enter the Commons. Private correspondence between Trenchard and William Simpson reveals that in 1718 he had hopes of entering the House with the aid of the Earl of Sunderland, latter implicated in the South Sea scandal.⁵⁹ The letter gives an indication of Trenchard's political leanings. In it he rejected the idea of standing as a Tory and declared that he was prepared to support Sunderland's ministry in all matters, that is, with the important proviso, all matters that tended to the public good:

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 276. The association was a somewhat spurious one, as many Tories also had trade interests, but it still appears to have retained a certain currency.

⁵⁹The Whig party was riven at this time by a dispute between Sunderland and Stanhope on one side and Walpole and Townsend on the other.

I have dropt all thoughts of standing for Shaftesbury finding I must stand entirely upon the Tory interest, and be at great expense and trouble in the Election, and be at last a Petitioner, and perhaps have the Court against me in the House; besides I am well assured I shall be chosen at Taunton if my Ld. Sunderland continues the same sentiments he owned when I was last in Town, and the affair be kept private.

You know me well enough to assure My Ld. I have a disinterested inclination to this Government and this Ministry, and shall give them my Assistance in every thing which I shall think consistent with the publick interest, and am prepared to meet in all Mankind common failings, and you can assure him of one thing more, that I shall expect none of the rewards which are so eagerly sought after, being too easie in my private affairs to engage upon any terms which are ever likely to be in my power.

If my Lord thinks it can be of any consequence to the Government or the Ministry to have my assistance, I am persuaded in this Age He will not esteem the Conditions hard, but of this his Lordship must be Judge, and the favour I desire of you is only to know his Resolution which will much oblige Your affectionate humble servant John Trenchard.⁶⁰

In a letter to another correspondent, undated but from textual clues probably written after 1719, he again stressed his attachment to Sunderland's ministry, as long as his lordship continued to act upon the principles of liberty, a reference to Sunderland's support for the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts in 1719:

When I was last to wait upon your Lordship you informed me that Lord Sunderland continued in the disposition to bring me into the House and the only obstacle to it was that he could not readily find a proper place for a gentleman of Mr. Pynsent's condition: I confess I always doubted it, and do so now more than ever since there are reasons to believe the Court are upon a new plan of politics, but I have now an opportunity to try the sincerity of great men's promises, for Mr. Pynsent is content to quit the House upon any terms, and will accept any place to do it which he will give up again immediately, so that my Lord can have no objection but what must be personal to me, for Mr. Pynsent never attends.

If my Lord continues to act upon the principles of liberty he is sure of my utmost assistance and there can scarce such a circumstance of affairs

⁶⁰SRL, MS G23, John Trenchard to William Simpson, 10 October 1718.

happen, but my attachment to the present ministry will be greater than to any who now appear to oppose them.⁶¹

After Trenchard's death, in a preface to the collected *Cato's Letters*, Gordon insisted that Trenchard was 'more partial' to Walpole's ministry than to any other. Whether this is true or not, and some would doubt the veracity of Gordon's assertion because of his apparent political *volte-face* after Trenchard's demise, other correspondence indicates that he was not opposed to the Whig establishment on ideological grounds, merely that he was critical, as was Gordon, of certain of its measures.⁶² Yet the conventional interpretation of Trenchard and Gordon's departure from the *London Journal* is that they were forced to leave when Walpole orchestrated a buy-out of the journal, in an attempt to silence the formidable 'Cato'.

This was apparently after previous attempts by Sunderland's ministry to put a stop to troublesome criticism from the London press had failed. On 28 May 1721 a parliamentary committee was set up to deal with newspaper 'libels' against the

⁶¹Sunderland (Blenheim) MSS, quoted in *The History of Parliament: The Commons 1715-1754*, ed. Romney Sedgwick, 2 vols. (London: HSMO, 1970), II, p. 481. In Sunderland's plans for the 1722 parliament drawn up around October 1721, Trenchard is put down to replace Pynsent at Taunton.

⁶²One anonymous contemporary wrote as follows: 'It has been since discovered that [Gordon] was assisted in writing [*Cato's Letters*] by Mr. *Trenchard*, a Man of sever Principles with regard to Liberty, and very much esteem'd by Persons of Judgment and Sense: In short, he perhaps was the only Man in his Time, who in political Subjects wrote what he thought, and wrote it for no other Reason but because he thought it, and that it could be of Service for his Country to know it. These Letters however had a great Character by their being more free from Party-Zeal & Personal Reflections than any other publick Writings that ever appeared. This Mr. G-n has been lucky in Life; from being no better than a common Amanuensis to Mr. *Trenchard*, he is now possest of a handsome Fortune and a profitable Post ... But see Sir, what the Effect of all these Rewards was; As soon as the Man got a Competency, he even quietly sat down, and trouled his Head no farther about Politics or Religion.', *An Historical View of the Principles, Characters, Persons, etc. of the Political Writers of Great Britain* (London, 1740), pp. 15-16. Modern historians have tended to accept Gordon's 'apostasy' as a given without questioning the possible partisan nature of contemporary criticism. See, for example, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, p. 2; and W.A. Speck, *Stability and Strife* (London, Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 227.

government. John Peele, the publisher of *The London Journal*, was one of those sent for but he evaded the committee by absconding. Gordon, although not Trenchard, was also sent for but he too avoided making an appearance by claiming to be indisposed. No further action was taken on the matter until two months later. When the government did act, however, it was not against Trenchard and Gordon but against another writer at *The London Journal*, Benjamin Norton Defoe. An introduction written by Defoe to an article entitled, 'Examination taken by the Parliamentary Committee of Secrecy with an account of what happened to them thereupon', aimed at disposing people to petition for a new parliament, roused the government's indignation. The offices of *The London Journal* were raided, its printing presses smashed and all copies of the offending paper were confiscated. Libel proceedings were initiated against Defoe but were later dropped.⁶³

Yet it would appear from a letter written by Trenchard to William Simpson that even while the committee on libels was sitting, government approaches were being made to Gordon. Trenchard wrote:

'Tis certain all the time the Committee was prosecuting him he had constant overtures from men in Power, who invited him to come and see them, which by my advice he has constantly refused till the Parliament was up; soon after which I consented he should wait upon a certain Lord ...⁶⁴

A letter from Gordon to Trenchard indicates that the meeting subsequently took place, at a time when *Cato's Letters* were still being published serially in *The London Journal*. Gordon reports that the lord had declared *Cato's Letters* to be fine and that he had said their authors deserved encouragement. Gordon's amiable

⁶³See 'The London Journal and its Authors 1720-1723', 13-19.

⁶⁴SRL MS G23, John Trenchard to William Simpson, 25 October [1721].

interview with an apparent representative of the Whig ministry would seem therefore to suggest, contrary to historical opinion, that the government did not regard the authors of *Cato's Letters* as hostile critics.⁶⁵ Nor does it appear that Trenchard and Gordon regarded themselves as such. Gordon assured Trenchard in his letter: 'I next acquitted you and myself from all Imputation of personal Enmity to any of the ministry'.⁶⁶

The interview closed without any apparent animosity or threats from either side. Indeed the unnamed lord seemed to regard Trenchard and Gordon as useful allies rather than as political enemies:

When I told him my intention to drop Politicks, he said He [would] not have me do that, but to mitigate my vehemence and try the way of Cicero's Ingenium temperatum; that I had shewn myself an Orator and a great man, and could never acquire higher Reputation; and as I had rais'd the passions of men too high, he would advise me to throw no more oyle but Water. I knew [what] all that meant; and repeated [that] I had done for [the] present with the subject, and whenever I resumed it It must be ex animo else I never could write with spirit or success.⁶⁷

Later Walpole, who took the helm after Sunderland's death in 1722, may have been discomfited by Trenchard and Gordon's dogged campaign to see those behind the South Sea Bubble brought to book but at the same time he had much to gain from their anti-Jacobite polemics, which helped render him more secure in his position

⁶⁵See, for example, 'The London Journal and its Authors 1720-1723', 34.

⁶⁶SRL, MS G23, Thomas Gordon to John Trenchard, 1 August [1721]. W.T. Laprade notes 'Early in September [1723] "Tom Brodrick and Mr. Trenchard" were at Bath with some of Walpole's friends, who hoped that "dangerous machinations" would not be imparted to their holidays.', *Public Opinion and Politics in Eighteenth Century England* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 274. Laprade does not cite where these quotations are taken from. Whether or not Trenchard was on amiable terms with Walpole, or his friends, he was still prepared to challenge the chief minister when he deemed it necessary. As the elected member for Taunton, on 12 December 1722 he opposed Walpole's proposal to remit £2 million owed to the government by the South Sea Company. See *The History of Parliament: The Commons 1715-1754*, I, p. 481.

⁶⁷SRL, MS G3, Thomas Gordon to John Trenchard, 1 August [1721].

by keeping alive a fear of the Pretender and his friends and the danger posed by them to the nation's liberty.

It would also appear from another of Gordon's letters that Walpole had made certain promises to him, promises which Trenchard seems to have known of and wished to see come to fruition. In a letter to Simpson shortly after Trenchard's death, Gordon told him that Trenchard had been 'only solicitous about Mr. Walpole's keeping his promise to me, and press'd me to write to him over and over the day before he died.'⁶⁸ This of course might seem to lend support to the generally held view that after Trenchard's death in 1723 Gordon, the moral and intellectual lightweight of the partnership by common assent, sold his services to Walpole, receiving in return for his silence and editorial assistance to the ministerial press the office of First Commissioner of Wine Licenses.⁶⁹

Yet Gordon continued, even after Trenchard's death, to uphold the Revolution Principles he had always espoused. In the commentary to his translation of Tacitus, published in 1725, he again attacked standing armies and the abuse of

⁶⁸Ibid., Thomas Gordon to Simpson, 28 December [1723]. Trenchard trusted Gordon would not abandon his principles for pecuniary gain and believed it was possible under a Whig ministry to serve the 'cause' of liberty and at the same time serve one's private interest. In the same letter in which Trenchard informs Simpson of Gordon's meeting with a government representative, he notes the lord offered Gordon 'all the service in his Power, and gave him hints that he should have a Pension.' Trenchard reports that Gordon respectfully refused the offer and he goes on to express his confidence in his literary partner: '[I]f I could help the Poor fellow to a creditable employment I should be willing to doe it, and I assure you the cause should not suffer by it, lett him act how he pleases; but I don't suspect him'.

⁶⁹The appointment gave rise to Pope's mocking allusion to Gordon as 'Silenus' in *The Dunciad* whilst elsewhere, in an *Epilogue to the Satires*, he observed: 'There's honest Tacitus once talked as big,/But he is now an Independent Whig', quoted in 'Thomas Gordon, the "Independent Whig"', 748. In part, modern misconceptions about *Cato's Letters* may be due to the selective use made of them by Bolingbroke and other contributors to the *Craftsman* a decade after they were first published, a practice, as already noted, roundly condemned by Gordon in the preface to the 1733

power. And in 1734, when Edmund Gibson, Archbishop of London, opposed the nomination by Lord Talbot, the Lord Chancellor, of Thomas Rundle as candidate for the see of Gloucester, Gordon stepped in on the side of Talbot. Gibson wanted to see Rundle's appointment blocked because he believed him to be a heretic and Walpole appeared to wish only to avoid a confrontation with the Church. Gordon, however, weighed in with a pamphlet entitled *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Codex*, in which he thundered that ecclesiastical tyranny would arise from Gibson's scheme for trying and disqualifying candidates to Church preferments.⁷⁰ If Gordon was never again as vocal in his criticism of Walpole as he had been at the height of the South Sea scandal it need not be attributed to his biddability. He had married Trenchard's widow and had in consequence become a wealthy man. It is perhaps more likely that he did not wish to aid Bolingbroke's cause by adding his voice to the vociferous criticism levelled at Walpole.

To view Gordon's later career as a fall from grace, therefore, is to misread *Cato's Letters*. It means glossing over the predominant concerns of both authors - the political influence of the Church on government and on the minds of the people and institutional, rather than personal, corruption - and ignoring what might be expected from writing which was journalistic in nature, that it was reactive. It was both shaped by specific political developments, such as the Atterbury plot, and in turn sought to shape public opinion. Yet viewed simply from the civic humanist perspective Trenchard and Gordon's attitude towards Walpole, which runs the

edition of the *Letters*. Taken out of context the 'Cato' of the *Craftsman* would indeed seem a turncoat dressed in Walpole's livery.

⁷⁰See *Public Opinion and Politics in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 349. The 'Dr. Codex' of the title refers to Gibson.

gamut from criticism to support, fails to make sense. Just as it is not credible to enlist Trenchard and Gordon in the ranks of Walpole's supporters, nor is it possible to place them in the vanguard of a Country opposition. They were too deeply suspicious of Tory religious and political sympathies to ally themselves with men who they believed threatened to destroy the liberties won by the Revolution. In sum, 'Cato' was the very model of an Independent Whig.

Chapter III

The ‘scientific politics’ of Trenchard and Gordon

As already seen, Trenchard and Gordon have been cast by revisionist historians as fervent proponents of civic virtue and lacerating critics of Court corruption under Walpole’s ministry, who looked not to constitutional mechanisms but rather, like Bolingbroke, to leaders of heroic and inspirational virtue to forestall the nation’s descent into corruption and consequent loss of liberty.¹ However, Trenchard and Gordon feature as singularly unlikely recruits in the impressively successful campaign by Pocock and others to displace Locke and the natural law tradition and install Machiavelli and the civic humanist tradition as the dominant ideology of the eighteenth century. Indeed if Trenchard and Gordon stand anywhere it is four-square in the opposition camp, with the ‘moderns’ rather than the ‘ancients’, and although only foot-soldiers they should, nevertheless, be viewed as enlisted in a similar enterprise to that undertaken by a line of more illustrious figures. Like Hobbes, Locke, Mandeville and Hume, to the extent that Trenchard and Gordon can be said to have had a political theory it was ‘scientific’, in that it was informed by an attempt to understand the governing principles of human nature in the light of increased knowledge of the material world. Rather than indulging in what Isaac Kramnick has called ‘the politics of nostalgia’, the Country party’s glorification of a previous age untouched by corruption, Trenchard and Gordon embraced the modern world, including the scientific revolution and especially the insights they believed it had allowed into human psychology. While obviously they do not rank as highly as Hobbes and Locke, their importance is as popularisers of radical

philosophic and political ideas and what they lack in intellectual stature is made up for by the scope of their influence.²

One of the most pervasive vocabularies, and like neo-Harringtonianism seized on and fought over by ideological or political opponents, was that belonging to the world of science. It reflected a notion which had become prominent during the seventeenth century that, in the words of Newton's tutor Isaac Barrow, the 'world natural' provided man with a model for the operation of the 'world politick'.³ Newtonian natural philosophy offered a response to the radical implications of the science-based materialist philosophy of Hobbes, Descartes and Spinoza. For Latitudinarians in particular it offered a solid anchor for a raft of concerns. They saw in it a moderating influence and a means of shoring up the religious, social and political status quo. Science might be used as the basis for rational belief and as a way of opposing the dangerous tide of superstition and fanaticism which threatened not just the position of the established Church but also the social and political order.

¹See chapter 1 of this thesis.

²The term 'radical' is used with some reservations. Trenchard and Gordon were certainly radical in their philosophical ideas but, as has been argued previously and will continue to be argued, politically they were supporters of the Whig establishment. They were not, therefore, politically 'radical' in the meaning of the word as defined by Pocock in a recent work: 'By "radical criticisms" I shall mean the increasingly articulate body of characterisations of and attacks upon [Walpole's] regime, "radical" in the sense that they formulated criticisms of the foundations of this regime in society and of the kind of society it was bringing into being.', 'Radical Criticism of the Whig Order in the Age between Revolutions', p. 33. Trenchard and Gordon might, however, be termed political radicals in the context of traditional Tory/Whig ideology, in that essentially they were in favour of a limited executive role in government and a separation of the Church from the state. Their politics might also be considered radical in the sense that their writings were taken up by British, American and French radicals at the end of the eighteenth century.

³Quoted in *The Radical Enlightenment*, p. 30. No reference for the Barrow quotation is given.

Newtonianism reimposed religious and social order by providing a mechanical philosophy which allowed for the existence of a controlling God who imposed harmony and stability in the natural world, a pattern repeated in man's creation and maintenance of society.⁴ The model of society that it legitimised was one which was rigidly defined, where every man knew and kept to his place. It rested on a theory of nature which conceived of matter and motion as intrinsically distinct. Matter being essentially inert, mere stupid or 'brute' substance, and incapable of motion except when acted upon by external forces. Superior to matter, and quite separate and distinct from it, was the force that animated it, which was derived externally from a Supreme Being who set all in motion and oversaw its progress. Man was divinely imbued with analogous powers on earth, to move, regulate or craft matter, so that he might produce a similar order to that imposed by God on nature. To do so required that man be guided by reason in the exercise of this power and, like God's power, that it not be employed arbitrarily. Men had each been allotted their particular place in the grand order but those chosen to govern

⁴Newtonianism countered purely mechanical accounts of the workings of the material world by making God the author of the mechanical laws of nature. He, it was argued, had set in place and continued to regulate the powers of gravitation and motion and the orbits of the planets. The following account of the ideological significance of science during the decades spanning the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries draws on Margaret Jacob's *The Radical Enlightenment and The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1976). Jacob's central argument, that Newtonianism was embraced by Low Churchmen and the Whig establishment because it could be made to serve specific social and political ends, appears sound. Less convincing, however, is her identification of a 'radical Enlightenment', which developed in opposition to Newtonianism, characterised by a set of markedly different philosophic and political beliefs. The political burden of Newtonianism, she contends, was monarchist. Arguably she overemphasises contemporary understanding of the implications of competing natural philosophies and underestimates the relevance of issues of partisan and practical politics. She is aware of the difficulty in fixing on a prescriptive definition of Latitudinarianism, cautioning against characterising its proponents as exclusively Whigs. See *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 29. However, she perhaps makes too much of the distance between the 'Latitude' men and the so called 'radicals', particularly when they often found themselves thrown together and under attack from High Churchmen. Trenchard and, in particular, Gordon consistently supported Hoadly and rallied to the defence of Whiston, Tillotson and other Low Churchmen when they came under fire, either for expressing heterodox views or urging toleration. Chapter 4 of this thesis moves

had to mould lesser men of uncultivated reason so as to create social harmony. Newtonian science and natural religion taught men, particularly those of lower rank, they should not be 'extremely and unreasonably solicitous' to alter greatly their station in life.⁵ At the same time man's power to acquire material possessions was seen as a facet of the control he exercised over matter.⁶

Newtonianism, therefore, naturalised both social hierarchy and self-interest and in sanctioning them, as part of a Christian God's design, simultaneously placed constraints on the form they were able to take. Arbitrary government and rampant self-interest, placed before the public good, perverted the social order and presaged decay, analogous to the decay seen in nature. The way in which the principle of universal gravitation explained the natural world, revealing the operation of a system 'for keeping the several Globes of the universe from shattering to Pieces', allowed Newtonians like Samuel Clarke to suppose a similar order could be imposed on society, based on the obedience of reasoning man to the providential will of God.⁷ The same Providence which regulated the mechanical laws of the universe kept watch over the 'world politick' and men, if they were to conform their actions to the will of God, had to produce conditions of political and social stability.

on from the present chapter to examine neo-Harringtonianism and deism and includes a discussion, and rejection, of Jacob's representation of neo-Harringtonians as 'radicals'.

⁵Richard Bentley, *The Works of Robert Bentley* (1838), quoted in *The Radical Enlightenment*, p. 92.

⁶*The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 189.

⁷William Derham, *Physio-Theology* (1714), quoted in *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 192.

Newtonianism was hostile to a purely mechanical law of motion that eliminated the need to postulate a separate and eternal Creator and to a theory of matter that rejected the dualism of Descartes and sought to explain the operation of the mind in terms of physical processes, thereby denying man free will. Those who took an opposing view and conceived of matter as self-moving, constantly in motion, and undifferentiated were consequently accused by the scientific and political establishment of atheism and republicanism, of making men the equals of God and of each other. Their denial of free will laid them open to charges of libertinism, of allowing men a licence for misconduct.

Hobbes came under attack because he threatened the Newtonian vision of order by seeming to offer a licence for the very excesses which threatened decay. By exploiting the possibilities inherent in Cartesian dualism he was able to posit an explanation of man and his thought processes which was purely mechanistic, an interpretation firmly rejected by Descartes himself, and explain the operation of the mind in terms of mechanical laws of motion. Trenchard, and Gordon, fully concurred with Hobbes' explanation of the 'springs' that determined human thought and action, coupling it with the epistemology of Locke:

It is justly observed by Mr. Locke, and by Mr. Hobbes, and others before him, that we have no innate ideas, nor can reflect upon them before we have them; that is, we cannot think before we have something to think upon. All objects and materials for thinking must be let in upon the mind through the organs of sense; and when they are there, we reflect or reason upon them; or to speak philosophically, when the action of exterior bodies strikes upon us, it must cause a second action or motion, and continue *in finitum*, unless it meets obstruction. This first action causes sensation, and the second reflection; and the first seems to me as necessarily to produce the latter, as wind sails a ship, or the winding up of a clock sets it in motion.⁸

In contrast to the Newtonians, Hobbes framed men as self-moving mechanisms and was therefore able to suggest that morality emanated from their motions rather than from being imposed externally. In the eyes of his opponents he was seen as presenting a social world dominated by competing interests and driven by the levers of self-interest and the desire for power, paralleling his conception of a universe in which mechanical laws were governed by material forces. Men, in his model of society, who rose in position and achieved great wealth did so not through the hand of Providence but by their own skill and cunning.⁹ It was a doctrine of 'self-sufficiency' which effectively rendered God redundant and was seen by his critics as necessarily presaging a decline into lawlessness, licentiousness and anarchy.¹⁰

Following Hobbes, Trenchard and Gordon moved easily from materialism to determinism, arguing that man thought and acted mechanically and necessarily, in response to external stimuli. By casting man as a mere cog, a mechanism propelled by necessity rather than free will, Trenchard and Gordon were accused like, Hobbes and Mandeville, of encouraging immorality and lawlessness. It was said of them that their intention was to: '*subvert the Foundation of all Morality and Religion, destroy the essential Difference of Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil; and*

⁸CL, II, no. 116, p. 808.

⁹See *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 169.

¹⁰One anonymous critic of deism identified the originator of this dangerous creed of 'self-sufficiency' in England: 'The first, who distinguished himself in *England* as a successful adversary to religion, and a teacher in *Self-sufficiency*, was Hobbes', *Deism Revealed, or the Attack on Christianity Candidly Reviewed In its real MERITS*, 2 vols. (London, 1751), II, p. 211. The libertine spirit, the author contended, could be defined in one word as 'Self-sufficiency', p. 206.

*take away the Ground, and Reason, and Obligation of all both divine and human Laws.*¹¹

Edmund Law, in a footnote to a discussion of free will in his translation of William King's *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, linked Trenchard and Gordon with Hobbes and Locke as supporters of the pernicious doctrine that man acts necessarily:

The most remarkable Defenders of this opinion, [that man acts necessarily; his will being part of a chain of cause and effect and therefore not free] among the Moderns, seems to be *Hobbs, Locke*, (if he be consistent with himself) *Leibniz, Bayle* the *Authors* of the *Philosophical Enquiry concerning human Liberty*, and of *Cato's Letters*.¹²

The implication which followed from the doctrine that men acted necessarily was that it seemed to absolve men from responsibility for their actions. It suggested that men's actions could be regarded as neither deserving of blame nor of praise and that notions of vice and virtue consequently were rendered meaningless. Trenchard and Gordon, however, did not argue that men were not responsible for their actions. Merely that man could not, as it were, stand outside himself in exercising his will. Trenchard believed men thought and acted 'necessarily' because they did so in response to a cause. To argue otherwise, he insisted, was absurd:

One may as well say, that a man can avoid seeing, when an object strikes the eye, or hearing, when it hits the ear, as to believe that he can decline thinking, when the motion caused by the object reaches the brain ... and when he does think, he must think as he can, that is, according as objects from without are represented and their images to him within.¹³

¹¹John Jackson, *A defense of Human Liberty* (London, 1730), preface.

¹²William King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, trans. Edmund Law (London, 1731), p. 208, n. 42.

¹³*CL*, II, no. 111, p. 783. The titles of the group of letters dealing with this subject illustrate the direction of Trenchard's arguments: no. 108, 'Inquiry into the Source of Moral Virtues'; no. 109, 'Inquiry into the Origin of Good and Evil'; nos. 110 and 111, 'Of Liberty and Necessity'; and no. 116, 'That whatever moves and acts, does so mechanically and necessarily'.

Vice and virtue were not merely meaningless words. However, following Hobbes, Trenchard insisted that 'virtue' was just the name men gave to actions they deemed socially useful. Actions were given the title of virtuous or vicious by man according to their social utility:

Every passion, every view that men have, is selfish in some degree; but when it does good to the publick in its operation and consequence, it may be justly called disinterested in the usual meaning of that word ... Disinterestedness, in any other sense than this, there is none. For men to act independently of their passions, is a contradiction! Since their passions enter into all that they do, and are the source of it: And the best actions which men perform, often arise from fear, vanity, shame, and the like causes.¹⁴

John Jackson, a critic of the 'absurd System of the Materialists', also lambasted 'Cato' for reducing all questions, both spiritual and temporal, to science:

That which seems to have led *Cato* and others, both Antients and Moderns, to think that nothing is the *object of Knowledge*, but *necessary Truths* or *Events*, is, the taking all Knowledge to be *scientific*; or understanding it in the Sense of *Science*.¹⁵

Trenchard and Gordon were denounced as deists and the accusation was certainly not without foundation. Rebutting the Newtonian model of a universe and society watched over by an ordering Providence, Trenchard presented the image of God as a superior if disinterested watchmaker:

He certainly is a more skilful artificer, who can make a watch which will go for a thousand years, and then break to pieces at a stated time, than another who makes one which must be wound up every day, and mended every month.¹⁶

The accusation of deism also carried with it very clear political connotations of Erastianism and republicanism. In *Deism Revealed* Trenchard and Gordon, as

¹⁴Ibid., II, no. 116, p. 808; I, no. 44, p. 302; no. 40, p. 281; no. 40, pp. 279-80.

¹⁵*A defense of Human Liberty*, p. 61.

authors of *The Independent Whig*, are counted along with Toland, Tindal and Collins, as well as Hobbes and Mandeville, as those 'known to be Deists'. They are condemned for having endeavoured to prove:

[T]here is no such order among us, distinct from and independent of, the State. They represent us, as constituted, and as almost ordained by Act of Parliament. When, in pursuit of *Hobbes's* scheme, they insist, that the Clergy ought always to be the creatures of the civil power, they serve no other cause than that of Deism, or rather Atheism.¹⁷

Similarly, another critic made a connection between Trenchard and Gordon's republican principles, Hobbes' analysis of human nature and Spinoza's pantheism:

['Cato'] condescended to copy Mr. *Hobbes's* monstrous Draught of human Nature, whose Pride dispos'd him to draw his own Picture for that of Mankind. *Spinoza's* scheme of religion, and some odd Notions of Government, were also reviv'd, tho' they have been often and unanswerably refuted.¹⁸

The link made between Hobbes' views on human nature and republicanism was not an entirely outlandish one. Those who viewed Hobbes as a dangerous figure, who threatened the foundations of British society, would have been able to find ready confirmation of their fears by looking at the ease with which republicans were able, contrary to Hobbes' intention, to wrest from his works arguments which reinforced their own. His rejection of a hierarchical concept of mind and matter was seen to undermine both the spiritual authority enjoyed by the Church and the temporal authority of the monarchy.

Perhaps because of shared preoccupations with liberty, defined by toleration and the primacy of civil rather than ecclesiastical authority, Hobbes proved as

¹⁶*CL*, II, no. 116, p. 814.

¹⁷*Deism Revealed*, p. 312.

serviceable to Dutch republicans as he did to those at home, such as Trenchard and Gordon. In the 1650s and 1660s Johan and Pieter de la Court and others had used Hobbes' works in order to counter the monarchist bias inherent in orthodox Calvinism and in support of their position on the unitary nature of sovereign power and, consequently, the relationship between Church and state.¹⁹ The de la Court brothers, however, differed from Hobbes in that they viewed civil society in terms of the accommodation of opposing passions rather than rights.

The contrast in emphasis was probably due to the de la Court's enthusiastic embracing of Descartes' theory of the passions, which they adopted less critically than Hobbes. Although they may have hoped to gain from Descartes a more scientific and realistic foundation for their political theory, in accepting a dualistic analysis of man they ensured that they remained within a largely conventional framework.²⁰ Like Hobbes, however, the de la Courts viewed man as inherently selfish. All his actions could be traced to self-love, which in its most elemental form was seen as the desire for continued existence, a desire which surpassed even the universal and consuming desire for power: 'Self-preservation is the supreme law of all individuals'.²¹ Given that men were by nature broadly equal, their

¹⁸*Popicola's Supplement to Cato's Letter Concerning Popularity*, (London, 1722), p. 2.

¹⁹They were anxious, like Hobbes, that the national Church hierarchy should not rival the power of the secular authority. However, they would have rejected his view that men should conform to the religion sanctioned by the state.

²⁰Men, Pieter de la Court argued, like beasts, were machines but they differed in that they possessed a soul. There is a moralising tone to his *Fables, Moral and Political* that resembles the seventeenth century French moralistes rather than Hobbes. All men, de la Court insisted, had a duty to lead a life that benefited the general welfare. Men failed in this, however, because they were ruled by self-love. See *Fables, Moral and Political, with Large Explications*, 2 vols. (London, 1703), passim.

²¹*Political Discourses*, quoted by Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes and Spinoza', *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 530-57, at p. 548. The following discussion of the de la Courts draws on the above text, pp. 547-50, and Eco O.G. Haitsma Mulier's *The Myth of Venice and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Assen: Van Gorcum and Comp., 1980), pp. 120-169.

survival was best achieved by placing themselves under the protection, and subject to the authority, of a sovereign power. However, man's nature remained essentially the same both prior to and after the establishment of civil society. The battle of wills continued, with men having to be coerced into compliance: 'All obedience is caused by compulsion', the only change being it was conducted in a less explicitly violent form.²² The desire of each man to live according to his own will also meant that governors inevitably strove to increase their power over their subjects. If there was to be any real stability a system had to be instituted which would balance these conflicting interests.

The state, therefore, had to function as an independent mechanism, the wheels of which could operate without being oiled by virtue, capable of controlling and channelling the passions of governors and governed so that both were compelled, by reason or force, to identify their private interest with that of the public interest. Contrary to Hobbes, the de la Courts believed a republican form of government was the most effective means of achieving this end:

Seeing the true Interest of all Countrys consists in the joint Welfare of Governors and Governed; and the same is known to depend on a good Government, that being the true Foundation whereon all the Prosperity of any Country is built; we are therefore to know, that a good Government is not that where the well or ill-being of the Subjects depends on the Virtues or Vices of the Rulers but (which is worthy of observation) where the well or ill-being of the Rulers necessarily follows or depends on the well or ill-being of the Subjects.²³

By representing the interests of the many, republican government prevented the private interests of the few from predominating and, by cancelling out particular

²²*Political Discourses*, quoted in 'Hobbes and Spinoza', p. 548.

interests, constrained men to further the common interest. Man might be incapable of true virtue but constitutional mechanisms could supply this lack and ensure that the public good was served, in spite of his corruption.²⁴ It was argued that the welfare of the people could only be secured by placing legislative power in the hands of 'so many, and of so many different sorts of men, as not by words only, but truly and indeed represent the whole People, and who being chang'd and reliev'd by turns, cannot promote their own advantage but by promoting that of the Publick at the same time.'²⁵ A republic would also exercise those powers necessary to fulfil the role for which government was instituted - to safeguard life and property - with less difficulty than a monarchy, that is with less force and strife, as men would more easily comply with laws that expressed their own will:

When men receive Commands and Laws from Persons who have one common Interest with them, and whom they take to be wiser than the common sort of Men, they easily yield to be led, directed, persuaded and governed by them.²⁶

For the de la Courts, therefore, a republic was best suited to man's nature, not because in ruling and being ruled he expressed the defining characteristics of what it was to be a man but because a republic constituted the only means of restraining man's otherwise ungovernable passions.

²³Pieter de la Court, *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick of Holland and West-Friesland* (London, 1702), p. 2.

²⁴Pieter de la Court argued: '[F]or that Men, when they come to be vested with the Power of the Government, cannot lay aside this natural humane Affection [self-love], it evidently follows that that is a good Form of Government, where those who sit at the Helm cannot promote their own Interest and Advantage unless they take care to advance the publick utility; nor avoid their particular ills, but in avoiding likewise those of the publick.', *Fables, Moral and Political*, I, p. 84.

²⁵*Ibid.*, I, p. 225.

²⁶*Ibid.*, I, p. 194.

A republic also rendered property more secure than under a monarchy, which demanded heavier and more arbitrarily levied taxes, and so conformed to the law of nature which taught 'That we must leave and give to every Man his own'.²⁷ Unlike other admirers of the classical republics, and Machiavelli's *Discourses*, the de la Courts also wrote extensively on economic matters and argued commerce flourished most in republics. Moreover, a thriving commerce was linked in their arguments to religious toleration. They held that the only consequence of persecution was the driving out of useful communities - who would be forced to seek refuge in rival trading nations - and the transfer of those communities' talents and wealth to the new host nations.²⁸

Spinoza, like the de la Courts, supported Johan de Witt, grand pensionary of Holland, in his challenge to the power exercised by the House of Orange. De Witt's blend of republican anti-clericalism so resembled that of the de la Courts that the anonymous pamphlet *De Jure ecclesiasticorum*, now attributed to Pieter de la Court, was commonly credited to his hand.²⁹ Critics of Spinoza, like those of Hobbes, viewed his scientific theory and his political theory as of one piece and he was consequently attacked for the political, social and ethical implications of his pantheistic materialism. In rejecting the notion of finite substance and the dualism of spirit and matter Spinoza undermined the doctrine of rule by divine right and, more explicitly than Hobbes, denied the existence of any right except that of

²⁷Ibid., I, p. 277

²⁸F.B. Kaye notes Mandeville's similar pairing of religious and commercial freedom. See Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. F.B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), I, p. xcix.

²⁹See 'Hobbes and Spinoza', p. 550.

power.³⁰ Consequently, he was perceived as presenting men with a world in which they were free to live by 'their own Determinations', where they might pursue their own interests and desires without fear of an external spiritual power, and the attendant threat of eternal damnation, and unawed by a divinely inspired temporal hierarchy.³¹

In *Spinoza Reviv'd*, William Carroll's attack on Tindal's *The Rights of the Christian Church*, Hobbes, Spinoza and Tindal were indicted as 'Modern Men of Matter', descendants of Epicurus and atheists: 'a Characteristical Mark of an *Atheist*, is to be a *Materialist*, that is one who maintains, that all is but Matter differently Modified'.³² Their view of the operation of the material forces in the natural world was linked by Carroll to their interpretation of the forces at work in the formation of political society. In spite of Hobbes' defence of monarchy, Carroll perceived that royal authority was weakened by a materialist explanation which excluded a providential design. Observing that Hobbes, Spinoza and Tindal, seconded by Locke, were agreed in their description of the origin of society, that

³⁰'But since the universal power of Nature as a whole is nothing but the power of all individual things taken together, it follows that each individual thing has the sovereign right to all it can do; i.e. the right of the individual is co-extensive with its determinate power.', Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), p. 237.

³¹Francis Gastrell, *The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in General* (1697), quoted in *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 170

³²William Carroll, *Spinoza Reviv'd* (London, 1709), p. 102. Carroll also labelled Locke a materialist. Pointing to chapter 4 of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Carroll accused him of teaching Spinoza's doctrine, 'viz. *The Eternal Existence of one only Cognitive and Extended Material Substance, differently modified in the whole World, that is the External Existence of the whole World itself*; to which the two authors give the Holy Name of GOD, and ascribe some of his Divine Attributes.', Spinoza's hypothesis, Carroll continued, 'is the very same that all the *Atheists* which ever were, did establish and maintain; for they were all of them without exception; that is, the few of them we have upon Record, *Materialists*. All that *Spinoza* and M. L[ocke] have done, is to endeavour to give that Hypothesis a Systematical Consistency', *A Dissertation Upon the Tenth Chapter of the Fourth Book of Mr. Locke's Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London, 1706), pp. ii, 289. Later Carroll goes on to link Locke with Toland and says that they shared the same design, p. 277.

men were forced to band together out of fear, he argued this was to maintain ‘That *all Power is Originally* in, and *immediately* from the *People*. That all the Right, Power and Authority of the *Sovereign* is immediately deriv’d from ‘em.’³³ In order to prove Tindal to be a disciple of Spinoza, Carroll drew repeated parallels between the republican and anti-clerical sentiments expressed in *The Rights of the Christian Church* and *The Rights of the Clergy*, or *De jure ecclesiasticorum*, which he attributed to Spinoza.

In terms of the implications for the ‘world politick’, critics such as Carroll failed to differentiate between Hobbes’ mechanistic materialism and Spinoza’s pantheistic materialism - the subversive element was the absence of an interventionist God.³⁴ A materialist explanation of the universe was seen, irrespective of the intentions of its proponents, as a threat to the prevailing social order, since if ‘there is no God nor Religion ... [then] all men are equal.’³⁵ Such scaremongering, however, was largely unfounded. Those like John Toland, Anthony Collins, Trenchard and Gordon who espoused a form of ‘scientific politics’ possessed no desire to see a levelling of men and an abnegation of property rights. Their radicalism was limited in scope and did not encompass a popular republic.³⁶ Although opposed to

³³*Spinoza Reviv’d*, p. 41.

³⁴So too, when attacking Hobbes, Spinoza and Toland in the 1704-5 Boyle lectures, Samuel Clarke did not distinguish between their philosophies. See *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, pp. 232, 238. Similarly, Leibniz associated Toland’s philosophy with that of Hobbes rather than with Bruno or Spinoza. (It was Bruno and not Spinoza, Jacob argues, who shaped Toland’s pantheism). On Jacob’s own evidence, this tendency on the part of not insignificant figures to ignore completely the differences between materialist philosophies tends to tell against her contention that these divergent interpretations supported opposing ideologies.

³⁵*The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in General*, quoted in *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 322.

³⁶Gordon, in the preface to *Cato’s Letters* said of Trenchard that he was against all levelling and that he was ‘fearful of trying experiments upon the constitution. He thought that it was already upon a very good balance’, *CL*, I, p. 30. Nevertheless, many of their critics saw or chose, for party advantage, to see them as dangerous republicans. Certainly the implications of some of the views

the idea of an absolutist monarchy, they believed the 'limited monarchy' won at the time of the Revolution Settlement was the surest means of avoiding such tyranny. Political pragmatism meant that they found themselves subscribing to an idiosyncratic model of republicanism, one in which the chief magistrate was a king.³⁷ It would seem incorrect then to argue, as Margaret Jacob does, that a great ideological divide existed between Newtonianism, portrayed as monarchist in political bias, and pantheism, which formed 'the philosophical foundation for republican and even democratic philosophies of government.'³⁸

Jacob is right, however, in emphasising the links which existed between English and Dutch freethinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁹ One of the figures on whom she focuses is Toland. It was during his residence in Holland in 1693, whilst engaged on theological studies, that he was drawn into the 'Anglo-Dutch republican nexus' and came into contact with men such as the republican Benjamin Furly and the Arminian theologian Jean Le Clerc. Furly's home in Rotterdam, which housed a formidable library of heretical books, acted as a point of contact between Dutch Dissenters, French refugees and English republicans. Shaftesbury was also a member of this circle and thought of Furly and other of his associates as the 'Holland Whig Party'. It was through this Dutch connection too that Toland met Locke. He and Collins also later became involved with a coterie of French Protestant refugees in The Hague, which included Prosper Marchand, the

expressed by Trenchard, Gordon and their associates were, if followed to their logical conclusion, extremely radical in political terms.

³⁷Though perhaps no more idiosyncratic than the Dutch Republic, governed effectively, except during the 'Stadholderless' periods, by the House of Orange.

³⁸*The Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 85-6, 224.

editor of Bayle's *Dictionary*, and the anti-absolutist Jean Rousset de Missy, men who professed radical views about God, nature and, Jacob would argue, politics. She numbers Trenchard as one of the members of this Anglo-Dutch coterie of radicals who, in London, congregated at the Grecian Inn. Whilst it is doubtful that, as Jacob would have it, Trenchard, together with Toland, Collins and Tindal, constituted the 'intellectual heart of the radical Whig "college"', what is noteworthy is that his involvement with this Anglo-Dutch network gave him access to a different tradition of thought to that of civic humanism, that is to say, to the natural law tradition of Hobbes, mediated through the de la Courts and Spinoza.⁴⁰ This natural law tradition allowed Trenchard, and Gordon, to conceive of a republic built not on virtue but on self-interest.

It is clear that Gordon's political philosophy was also shaped by the natural law tradition. His pamphlet *An Essay on Government*, published in 1747, just two years after the Jacobites' last hurrah, was conducted entirely in the language of this tradition. Dismissing exhortations for Tories and Whigs to unite in an 'amphibious sect', he set out what he believed to be the first foundations of government. He ridiculed the doctrine of divinely ordained government but asserted that men were under a duty, as a law of nature, to obey the supreme power. Borrowing chiefly from Locke, he argued that men in the state of nature agreed to establish an arbitrator in order to avoid violence when their rights were invaded, property and family rights being antecedent to the constitution of states. Taking issue with

³⁹Jacob is not alone in highlighting this connection. See, for example, Rosalie L. Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), 23-46.

Grotius, he argued that a people and an individual were entrusted with rights that could not be surrendered. Moreover, if a man could not totally transfer a right to a third party, much less could he transfer those of his posterity. The surrender of a people's rights could not be absolute and could not bind their posterity. If a trustee of power transgressed the limits tacitly set to the grant of power the people had a right to call him to account. The supreme power, he insisted, was always with the people, even if some parts of it were delegated to the monarch. The basis on which this theory of government rested was an idea of an unchanging human nature, driven by the same fundamental passions:

What Reason have we to imagine ourselves so much more wicked than our Fore-fathers? In Cases where the Motives and Objects are the same, why are we to presume they would pursue more righteous Measures to obtain their Ends? ... It is the most common Saying with Divines and Philosophers, that the World grows daily worse and worse; why they say so, is only that they may indulge their own Spleen and rail at the vices of Mankind.⁴¹

It would appear that the intellectual framework which shaped Trenchard and Gordon's thought was that of the natural law rather than the civic humanist tradition and the idea that man should be understood as he was, rather than in relation to an unachievable classical ideal. And for both men, a republican system of government, which might include a monarchical element, flowed logically from a scientific study of man and the natural world. Building on similar foundations as the de la Courts, whose interpretation of Hobbes was informed by a reading of Tacitus as well as Machiavelli, they contended, like them, that a republican form of

⁴⁰See *The Radical Enlightenment*, pp.142-176, 150-1, 230 and *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p.226. Pocock has argued that the English, unlike the Scots and other Europeans, spoke predominantly in the language of civic humanism (see chapt. 1 of this thesis).

⁴¹Thomas Gordon, *An Essay on Government* (London, 1747), p. 14; also see pp. ii, 6, 7, 8, 31, 35-9.

government was best adapted in terms of man's psychology to produce stability.⁴² Trenchard and Gordon knew human nature to be the same everywhere and at all times and for men to be equally frail, both morally and physically. They knew too that the idea of a divinely ordained model of government was an absurdity and that in the 'world politick', as in the 'world natural', the governing principle was the relative power of material forces:

[F]rom the nature of man, and of power itself, our government must at last centre in a democracy; for all power is of a growing nature, and men will always do what they can do, when they can meet no restraints, but what they put upon themselves.⁴³

From what Trenchard had to say elsewhere in his writings it is clear that this was not an endorsement of 'radical democracy'. It was merely a rejection of an aristocratical form of government. For both Trenchard and Gordon, government by the best, a natural aristocracy, was an impossibility.⁴⁴ As already noted, on this point, as on many others, they differed from Bolingbroke. Even a noble character, they believed, if such existed, was soon corrupted by power. Constitutional checks had therefore to supply the defects of human nature. Following Hobbes, they argued men were inherently selfish and self-seeking. Given that they were also broadly equal, in terms of strength and abilities, if no artificial arbiter was

⁴²Gordon appears to have been acquainted with Pieter de la Court's *The True Interest of Holland*, to which he refers in the *St. James's Journal*, 13 August 1723. *The True Interest* was published in English translation in 1704; a translation of *Fables, Moral and Political* had already appeared in 1703. From what has already been said of Trenchard's contacts with radical circles in Holland it is not unlikely that he, if not also Gordon, was aware of the de la Courts' other works, including *Political Discourses* and *Political Balance*. For a discussion of the reading of Tacitus and Machiavelli as republican writers see chapter 7 of this thesis.

⁴³John Trenchard, 'On Elections', *Essays on Important Subjects* (London, 1755), p. 45, written under the signature of 'Cato'.

⁴⁴Gordon insisted: 'It is not blood or nature, but art or accident, which makes one man excel others. Aristotle, therefore, must either have been in jest, when he said that he, who naturally excelled all others, ought to govern all; or said it to flatter his pupil and prince, Alexander the Great.', *CL*, I, no. 45, pp. 307-8.

permitted to intrude the inevitable outcome was a lifetime of unremitting internecine struggle. It was to escape this state of perpetual hostility, and not through any instinct of benign sociability, that men submitted themselves to government. Men, they contended, were naturally distrustful of one another and 'this made a great philosopher call the state of nature, a state of war'.⁴⁵ So although their theory of government was Lockean their understanding of basic human nature resembled that of Hobbes. All that was possible was that men who were by nature selfish could be brought to realise that the surest way of satisfying their selfish desires was by not impeding the general interest

Harrington also, of course, figured largely in Trenchard and Gordon's analysis but not, it would seem, in the manner described by Pocock. In *The Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock argues that Harrington's dominant purpose was the expression of individual virtue through civic participation.⁴⁶ Yet there is little evidence that there

⁴⁵Ibid., I, no. 33, p. 236.

⁴⁶See *Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 388-400. It is this expression of individual virtue through civic participation that appears central to the civic humanist or classical republican paradigm. Public virtue is the keynote term in the definition of the republican paradigm given by those historians whose names have become most strongly associated with it. Pocock has claimed the 'basic concept in republican thinking is *virtus*' and his readers must take him at his word. See 'Cambridge paradigms and Scotch philosophers', p. 248. As Lance Banning, a stout defender of Pocock, has recently explained: 'Pocock argued that the central theme of eighteenth-century British discourse – the fulcrum on which fundamental changes turned – was its preoccupation with the dangers posed to virtue by the growing role of commerce.', 'The Republican Interpretation: Retrospect and Prospect', *The Republican Synthesis Revisited*, ed. M.M. Klein, R.D. Brown, J.B. Hench (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1992), pp. 91-117, at p.109. Similarly, Gordon Wood also believes virtue to be at the heart of the republicanism of the American Revolution: 'The sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole formed the essence of republicanism and comprehended for Americans the idealistic good of the Revolution. From this goal flowed all of the Americans' exhortatory literature and all that made their ideology truly revolutionary. This republican ideology both presumed and helped shape the Americans' conception of the way their society and politics should be structured and operated – a vision so divorced from the reality of American society, so contrary to the previous century of American experience that it alone was enough to make the Revolution one of the great utopian movements of American history.', *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969), p. 54.

was any great optimism on the part of Harrington, and certainly not on Trenchard and Gordon's part, that the practice of civic virtue alone might transform society.⁴⁷ On this point, Trenchard and Gordon's position was a good deal closer to that of Harrington than to Pocock's neo-Harringtonian construct. The utopian republic depicted in Harrington's *Oceana* is one of institutional checks and balances which rather than allowing scope for its citizens to display their virtue is proof against their propensity for vice. 'Give us good orders' Harrington argued 'and they will make us good men.'⁴⁸ Trenchard and Gordon concurred with Harrington. Men, they believed, were not generally by nature virtuous and, therefore, a civil constitution and legal framework had to supply this deficiency and impart the vigour necessary to sustain society, without which it would disintegrate. Man's self-interest and desire for power were so strong that they were incapable of

However what is historically contingent, it would appear, is the way in which public virtue is exercised. Pocock outlines how in the Graeco-Roman world virtue would be expressed in direct participation in the political process, in ruling and being ruled in turn. For Florentine thinkers such as Machiavelli the virtue of the citizen was displayed predominantly in his role as a member of the city's militia. For neo-Harringtonians it was associated with opposition to a system of public credit, political patronage and standing armies. 'It was in the course of criticizing, attacking and defending these perceived realities that the classic oppositions between virtue and fortune, virtue and corruption, were joined by a third, that between virtue and commerce.' See 'Cambridge paradigms and Scotch philosophers', pp. 235-7, 236-7.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 399. As already noted, Pocock's account of the neo-Harringtonian inversion of Harrington's historical time-frame does not hold true for Trenchard and Gordon. See *Machiavellian Moment*, p. 420. Quite the opposite, they adhered to Harrington's unsepiated view of Gothic government. See *CL*, I, no. 67, p. 473. They had no use for such a device precisely because their intention was not to denounce corruption in the terms described by Pocock. Trenchard and Gordon accepted Harrington in a more undiluted form than Pocock suggests but, like the de la Courts, they added elements which made the republic of *Oceana* more relevant to a commercial economy. On the other hand, and again contrary to Pocock's account, Trenchard and Gordon were ready to jettison certain Harringtonian principles, such as opposition to a standing army, or at least put them on hold until a present threat to the nation's liberty had passed. Indeed the surrender of principle on this point may not have been so keenly felt by Trenchard and Gordon in the face of a gradually changing society, in which the benefits to be derived from a division of labour may have begun to be perceived as of greater value than a citizen militia.

⁴⁸'Give us good Men, and they will make us good Laws, is the Maxim of a Demagog, and is (thro the alteration which is commonly perceivable in men, when they have the power to work their own Wills) exceeding fallible. But give us good Orders, and they will make us good Men, is the Maxim of a Legislator, and the most infallible in the Politics.', James Harrington, 'The Commonwealth of Oceana', *The Oceana of James Harrington and His Other Works. With an Exact Account of life, Prefix'd by John Toland* (London, 1700), pp. 75-6.

internal check and had therefore to be controlled by external mechanisms.⁴⁹ The imperfections of human nature, Harrington argued, had to be remedied by the structural mechanics of government:

[T]he perfection of Government lyes upon such a libration in the frame of it, that no Man or Men in or under it can have the interest; or having the interest, can have the power to disturb it with Sedition.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Trenchard and Gordon did believe that men could be made to understand that their long term private interests were best served by subsuming their immediate desire to the public interest. See chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. However this was only possible if constitutional mechanisms were in place which would offer equal protection to the rights of all. The de la Courts also seem to have been impressed by Harrington, Pieter de la Court addressed a manuscript on trade to him in 1674. See 'Spinoza and Hobbes', p. 670.

⁵⁰'The Commonwealth of Oceana', p. 52. David Wootton has identified a number of problems with Pocock's analysis of republicanism, two of which centre on the latter's account of Harrington. Firstly, Wootton argues that in order to build a bridge from Machiavelli to Madison, Pocock plays down the significance of representative government. Machiavelli and Renaissance thinkers conceived of participatory politics in terms of the city-state. But in Wootton's view: '[o]ne of the reasons why Harrington is supremely important is that he adapts the civic tradition of republicanism to the nation state ... Harrington, because he thinks in terms of representation not participation, is able to cut the tie between republicanism and the city-state ... Harrington marks the death, not the continuation, of this classical republican tradition.' Secondly, Wootton argues that Harrington's lack of preoccupation with virtue, and his reliance on constitutional mechanisms alone, places him in a line of thought to which Hume was heir. See 'The Republican Tradition: From Commonwealth to Common Sense', pp. 14, 15. It could be argued that Trenchard and Gordon similarly belong to this tradition. To a certain degree this is true. However, to talk of a 'tradition' which descends from Harrington to Hume runs the risk of obscuring important differences. Moreover, it is precisely because Trenchard and Gordon appear so close to Hume on the issue of virtue – as on others such as religion (see chapter 4 of this thesis) – that it might be rash to draw too close a comparison. There are significant points of divergence in their political thought. Most obviously there is the different stand taken by Trenchard and Gordon on the one hand and Hume on the other regarding natural rights. Trenchard and Gordon, as has been shown (see chapter 2 of this thesis in particular), were unambiguous in their defence of natural rights. Hume was also more amenable to the idea of monarchy than were Trenchard and Gordon. It is hard to imagine they would have countenanced a 'civilised' monarchy (to use Hume's term), no matter how benign, as opposed to a mixed constitution.

This second point raises the question of whether Trenchard and Gordon might best be understood in terms of what Quentin Skinner has called the 'neo-roman' tradition in early modern political thought. In brief, at the risk of doing a disservice to the cogency of Skinner's argument, he contends that the defining division between the neo-roman and the liberal understanding of freedom is that neo-roman writers repudiate categorically the classical liberal assumption that force, or the coercive threat of it, constitutes the only form of constraint that interferes with individual liberty. They reject the proposition that no matter the form of government, be it a republic or a monarchy, the freedom is the same. 'The neo-roman writers insist, by contrast, that to live in a condition of dependence is in itself a source and a form of constraint. As soon as you recognise that you are living in such a condition, this will serve in itself to constrain you from exercising a number of your civil rights.' The idea of 'dependence' is associated with the classical notion of servitude. Neo-roman theorists 'assume that what it means to speak of a loss of liberty in the case of a body politic must be the same as in the case of an individual person'. And they go on to argue 'in the clearest proclamation of their classical allegiances – that what it means for an individual person to suffer a loss of liberty is for that person to be made a slave.' See *Liberty Before Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 84, 36. There is little evidence, however, that Trenchard and Gordon

Trenchard and Gordon similarly looked to a system of government which would function effectively, that is, protect the interests of the people, regardless of the virtue of those who governed. They were political pragmatists who displayed a lack of confidence in civic virtue as a warrant of liberty. Following Harrington, they believed it was political institutions and not the virtue of a people and its leaders that ensured liberty. Gordon argued that 'the making of laws supposes all men naturally wicked; and the surest mark of virtue is, the observation of laws that are virtuous: if therefore we would look for virtue in a nation, we must look for it in the nature of government'.⁵¹ What he had in mind was a government that would operate, in his words, as a 'piece of Clockwork', that would constrain men to act in the public interest and would not require the practice of virtue to oil its wheels. A study of men, he argued, showed that true virtue, free from self-interest, could not realistically be expected of men. Yet this was of no matter in terms of maintaining a free society. All that mattered was that men should find it in their own interest to serve the general good and punishable and parlous to oppose it.⁵²

It was an idle dream, Trenchard and Gordon believed, to imagine corruption might be eliminated but it was possible to remove the opportunities which allowed it to flourish. Trenchard repeatedly urged that a commission should be established by parliament to police the collection and expenditure of public revenue. He also proposed that a register be set up, open to the public, in which members of

thought in such terms. They favoured a republic over a monarchy purely because one was government by the rule of law and the other was government by personal prerogative. In the former man enjoyed the fullest possible possession of his liberty and in the latter he did not. Trenchard and Gordon consistently discussed liberty in 'liberal' terms of freedom from constraint and not in terms of dependence. See, in particular, chapters 2 and 8 of this thesis.

⁵¹*CL*, I, no. 31, p. 222.

⁵²*Ibid.*, I, no. 40, p. 282.

parliament should be legally bound to record all pensions, gratuities or favours received from the Crown and that failure to register receipt of such rewards be deemed a treasonable offence. Gordon likewise called for transparency and accountability in the raising and stewardship of revenue, insisting that the people should be informed of how their taxes were being spent and that parliament should ensure managers of the public coffers were made answerable for their actions.⁵³

At the same time, their materialist philosophy, based on the sensationalism of Hobbes and Locke, viewed man as a mechanism driven by his desires and passions and in doing so they explained and validated a new market orientated society dominated by self-interest.⁵⁴ Walpole epitomised its worst excesses but that did not mean the system was reprehensible in itself - corruption after all was as old as human nature - merely that institutional guards had to be established and maintained in order to prevent an abuse of power, whether this be by trade monopolies or by government. A commercial republic was, therefore, presented by both Trenchard and Gordon and the de la Courts as most suited to man's nature. It allowed play to his dominant and inextinguishable passion, the fountainhead of all other passions, self-love, whilst keeping it within bounds by means of a constitutional and legal framework.

⁵³See John Trenchard, 'Some Considerations upon the State of our Publick Debts in general, and of the Civil List in particular', *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon*; 'On Offices and Corruption', *Essays on Important Subjects*; and Thomas Gordon, 'The Nature and Weight of the Taxes of the Nation', *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon*.

⁵⁴Contrary to what Jacob argues, therefore, in the case at least of these two 'radical' Whigs the ideological implications of the natural philosophy and psychology they espoused were not at odds with Newtonianism, or rather not in the way she suggests. Indeed Trenchard and Gordon's adoption of Hobbesian materialism and Lockean epistemology permitted them to legitimise the ruling order, that is the new commercial society, more emphatically than the tools offered by Newtonianism would have allowed.

Trenchard and Gordon recognised, however, that institutional checks alone were not enough. It was necessary for the people to exercise vigilance in defence of their liberty. The difficulty though, Trenchard and Gordon realised, was how a society of self-interested men, for whom true civic virtue was an impossibility, could be prevailed upon to attend to the public interest. Like Locke, they suggested that man's first nature could be remoulded by education, that 'Education alters nature'.⁵⁵ For Trenchard and Gordon, however, this second nature was as incapable of true virtue as the first. As appeals to reason were ineffective, that faculty being subordinate to the passions, for Trenchard and Gordon the process of education involved an address to a higher authority, that which Hume was later to call man's 'calm desires'. The lesson to be learnt, they argued, was that by first serving the public interest man merely served his own long-term interest: '[T]he whole people, by consulting their own interest, consult the public, and act for the public by acting for themselves.'⁵⁶ And the public interest was defined in terms of a wealthy and flourishing trading nation, not as a classical ideal:

Nothing is so much the interest of private men, as to see the publick flourish: for without mentioning the pleasure and internal satisfaction which a generous mind must receive, in seeing all people about him contented and happy, instead of meagre and starved looks, nakedness and rags, and dejected and melancholy faces; to see all objects gay and pleasing; to see fruitful and well manured fields; rich splendid, and populous cities, instead of barren rocks, uncultivated deserts, and dispeopled and empty towns: I say, besides avoiding all this horror, every man's private advantage is so much wrapt up in the publick felicity, that by every step which he takes to depreciate his country's happiness, he undermines and destroys his own: when the publick is secure, and trade and commerce flourish every man who has property, or the means of acquiring property, will find and feel the blessed effects of such a circumstance of affairs; all the commodities which he has to dispose of will find a ready vent, and at a good price; his inheritance will increase every day in value; he is encouraged, and finds it his interest, to build, and improve his lands,

⁵⁵*CL*, II, no. 62, p. 431.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, I, no. 38, p. 271.

cultivate new trades, and promote new manufactures; and by these means the people will be employed, and enabled to live in plenty, to marry, increase, and pay for the productions of the land, which otherwise will have little or no production: foreigners will be invited to partake of our happiness, and add to the publick stock; and even the poor and helpless will have their share in the general felicity, arising from the superfluities and charity of the rich.⁵⁷

Reason was not to be depended upon. Gordon dismissed the idea that men could be guided by pure reason, which would lead them on the path to truth. Every man, he argued, reasoned differently because he was moved by his passions and not by reason:

So mechanical a thing is human judgment! So easily is the human machine disconcerted and put out of its tone! And the mind subsisting in it, and acting by it, is calm or ruffled as its vehicle is so. But though the various accidents and disorders happening to the body, are the certain causes of disorders and irregular operations in the mind; yet causes that are internal affect it still more; I mean the stimulations of ambition, revenge, lust, and avarice. These are the great causes of the several irregular and vicious pursuits of men.

Neither is it to be expected, that men disagreeing in interest, will ever agree in judgment. Wrong, with advantages attending it, will be turned into right, falsehood into truth; and, as often as reason is against a man, a man will be against reason: And both truth and right, when they thwart the interests and passions of men, will be used like enemies, and called names.⁵⁸

Avarice, however, was a unifying interest, common to most men. The desire for wealth, or avarice, was also one of man's strongest passions. Moreover, as Trenchard and Gordon argued, it could serve as one of the foundations of a free society.⁵⁹ For once men accepted that avarice was best satisfied under a government which protected the property of its subjects, they would realise that it

⁵⁷Ibid., II, no. 89, pp. 638-39.

⁵⁸Ibid., I, no. 47, p. 317.

⁵⁹As Trenchard observed: '[W]here the public is secure, and trade and commerce flourish, every man who has property, or the means of acquiring property, will find and feel the blessed effects of such a circumstance of affairs', *ibid.*, II, no. 89, p. 639.

was in their private interest to give assiduous attention to the choice of their governors and maintain a vigilant watch over them once elected:

[N]othing upon earth is of a more universal nature than government, and every private man upon earth has a concern in it, because in it is concerned, and nearly and immediately concerned, his virtues, his property, and the security of his person.⁶⁰

For Trenchard and Gordon, as for Francis Hutcheson, the desire for wealth was laudable, at least in terms of its social effects, when achieved by lawful industry or 'honest commerce'. And like Mandeville and Hume they saw man's unsatisfied desires as the driving force of progress and civilisation. Once the basic needs of the body were satisfied man sought new means of gratification:

As soon as men are freed from the importunities of hunger and cold; the thoughts and desire of conveniency, plenty, ornament, and politeness, do presently succeed: and then follow after, in very quick progression, emulation, ambition, profusion, and the love of power: and all these, under proper regulations, contribute to the happiness, wealth, and security of societies.⁶¹

The sensationalist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke helped provide Trenchard and Gordon with a rationale for the modern commercial age. For them, man was defined by his limitless desire, fired by imagination, rather than by his reason:

[N]ew acquisitions bring new wants; and imaginary wants are as pungent as real ones. So that there is the same end of wishing and of living, and death only can still the appetites.⁶²

⁶⁰Ibid., I, no. 38, p. 269.

⁶¹Ibid., I, no. 67, p. 473.

⁶²Ibid., I, no. 40, p. 278. Hobbes had claimed: '[T]here is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense...For there is no such *Finis ultimus* (utmost ayme) nor *Summum Bonum* (greatest Good) as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers. Nor can a man any more live, whose Desires are at an end, then he, whose Senses and Imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continuall progresse of the desire from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the later.', *Leviathan*, (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 129-30.

The definition of man as a pleasure-seeking creature naturalised the pursuit of wealth and presented it as morally neutral, hedged of course by the proviso that no one should be harmed in the process:

[S]ince the mind of men, like every thing else in nature, is in constant progression, and in perpetual pursuit of one thing or other, I do not condemn the moderate pursuit of wealth if we do not buy it too dear, and at the price of our health or integrity.⁶³

For Trenchard and Gordon, Hobbesian and Lockean epistemology, and behind that the modern tradition of Bacon and Newton, were all of one piece with their moral, political and religious thought. All men were the same, Trenchard argued, and they had common failings because they were like ‘machines or systems of nature’. In the case of all life forms, each plant and animal system, or species, had a distinct identity. Men differed from other systems only in that they were composed of ‘vastly finer and more numerous parts ... capable of more operations’. Whilst one of these operations was the facility for reflection, Gordon argued man was nevertheless ruled by his passions and observed, quoting La Rochefoucauld, ‘that the understanding is the dupe or tool of the heart, that is our sentiments follow our passions’. Man was by nature selfish, a self-focused machine ‘who naturally pursues what is pleasant or profitable in his own eyes, though in doing it he entails

⁶³CL, II, no. 102, p. 726. It is because Trenchard and Gordon viewed the pursuit of wealth and material possessions as a legitimate pursuit and mental tranquillity as an unachievable goal that it seems problematic to label their thought Epicurean. Both Trenchard and Gordon would probably have been familiar with a rehabilitated Epicurus through translations of Gassendi’s commentaries on the Greek philosopher, such as *Three Discourses of Happiness, Virtue and Liberty. Collected from the World of the Learned Gassendi by Monsieur Berner* (London, 1699). Gordon also refers in *Cato’s Letters* to Bayle’s favourable entry on Epicurus in his *Dictionary*. Trenchard was aware of, and in sympathy with, Epicurus’ views on the nature of God. See chapter 4 of this thesis. Of course, both Trenchard and Gordon also had much in common with the French Epicurean tradition of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which was not antagonistic to worldliness. Trenchard and Gordon wrote approvingly of literary moralists such as St. Evremond but there were important differences in their thought, such as in their definition of virtue. See chapter 6 of this thesis.

misery upon multitudes' and was capable of exhibiting only a simulacrum of virtue.

As one of Trenchard and Gordon's critics recognised, the sensationalist philosophy of Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* and Hobbes' *Leviathan* could be used not only to explain but to justify ministerial corruption. It was seen to have political as well as moral implications. In a letter written to the *London Journal* after Trenchard and Gordon's departure, 'Philaretus' deliberately misquoted the *Letters*, whilst retaining the spirit of Trenchard's sensationalism, and in doing so presented Trenchard and Gordon as Court apologists:

"You are only *Machines*, of one *particular* Frame, call'd the *Ministerial*, who *must* be *acted upon* in the Manner You are: and I *Myself* don't find Fault, because there can be *Blame* in You, but because as I am a *Machine* of another particular Frame, call'd the Patriotical, I cannot help it. I do assure You, as it is with *You*, and all the World, so it is with *Me*. I neither *move*, nor *act*, but am *moved*, and acted *upon*, without any *Will* or *Choice* of my own; and therefore, truly and *philosophically* speaking, have no *Virtue*, and can neither deserve, no expect, the *Praise* of Good Actions." And thus ends the glorious *Scheme of making* Ministers VIRTUOUS, and the World UNCORRUPT.⁶⁴

In another letter, written shortly afterwards to Trenchard and Gordon's new home at the *British Journal*, 'Popicola' made it clear that he believed 'Cato's' sympathies inclined towards Walpole's ministry rather than to a Country or Tory Opposition:

Your answerable Arguments concerning our Spring of Action, are perverted to maintain the most enormous Villanies. I have seen a late Epistle to that Purpose, with several strained Allusions to Clock-work. It supposes (amongst other Curiosities) two Clocks; the one a Court Clock, and the other a Country Clock; and concludes, that if the Court Clock does not go as well as the Country Clock, yet the Country Clock can't reproach the Court Clock, nor vaunt its own Perfections, since they both move alike by Necessity. Now, Sir, I apprehend this to be a sophistical Way of Reasoning, for a Court Clock, however splendid or valuable to outward

⁶⁴*London Journal*, 2 March 1723.

Appearance, (if it goes amiss) ought to be examined into and, if possible, set to go right; but if, upon Enquiry, it be found faulty beyond a Possibility of Amendment, then it must (like one of the inferior Sort) be sentenc'd to a Dissolution.⁶⁵

It is difficult to square Trenchard and Gordon's rejection of the idea of man as a 'free agent' and the idea of virtue as anything but a social construction with the image of the authors of *Cato's Letters* presented by Pocock.⁶⁶ They could not hold these beliefs and at the same time believe in the civic humanist idea of an autonomous, rational individual whose nature as man was only truly realised through the practice of virtue. Clearly, it was not the Aristotelian tradition, with the image of man as a *zoon politikon*, which formed the basis of *Cato's Letters*, rather they bear the impress of the natural law tradition of Grotius, Selden and Hobbes, grounded on the central premise of man's overarching self-interest.⁶⁷ Equally, the *Letters* were shaped by the materialist and sensationalist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, providing validation and a firmer 'scientific' basis for a perspective which viewed man as primarily a property owning individual. Consequently Trenchard and Gordon's republic, in common with that of the de la Court brothers, was built on very different foundations to those of the civic humanist ideal and the impact of classical influences on *Cato's Letters* was largely confined to its rhetorical facade.

⁶⁵*British Journal*, 16 March 1722. The letters written by 'Philaretus' and 'Popicola' were in reply to a number of Trenchard's letters in which he denied that man was a 'free being'. See footnote no. 13 above.

⁶⁶Trenchard dismissed the opinion that virtue was 'a sort of real being [that] subsists in its own nature', *CL*, II, no. 109, p. 767.

⁶⁷Besides numerous direct or indirect references to Hobbes and Locke, Gordon also cited Grotius, Pufendorf and Selden in his writings. See 'An Account of the Author', p. 6; *An Essay on Government*; and *CL*, I, no. 44, pp. 299, 301, and II, no. 116, p. 808.

Chapter IV

‘Neo-Harringtonianism’ and Deism

Since the eighteenth century historians have noted a recurrent link in late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century England between what has recently been termed ‘neo-Harringtonian’ republicanism and deism. Pocock believes the two developments display a shared continuity with Puritanism and that they carried on the latter’s crusade against Church interference in state affairs.¹ Earlier historians were struck by a similar association of ideas during the English civil war. In his *History of Great Britain* David Hume included deists amongst those who constituted the republican party, placing Harrington and Sidney at their head, and recorded that they had no other object than political liberty.² And in ‘Of Superstition and Enthusiasm’, he observed that deists and Independents whilst most opposite in their religious views were united by their political principles during the civil war.³

In recent years Margaret Jacob has written at length, and somewhat controversially, on this connection after the 1688 Revolution, presenting it as a conjunction of radical politics on the one hand and radical philosophy and science on the other, set in opposition to the status quo, that is to the reactionary conservatism of both Court

¹Pocock regards as noteworthy the ‘high degree of correlation in the early eighteenth century between neo-Harrington republicanism and deism’ and observes ‘republicanism and deism, alike carried on the English and Puritan crusade against a clergy enjoying separate or *jure divino* authority’, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 476-7.

²See Günter Gawlick, ‘Hume and the Deists: a Reconsideration’, in *David Hume: Bicentenary Papers*, ed. G.P. Morice (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), pp. 128-138, at p. 132.

³See David Hume, ‘Of Superstition and Enthusiasm’, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), pp. 78-9.

Whiggery and Newtonianism.⁴ Rejecting what she sees as the simplistic assumption that at every turn Newtonian natural philosophy fostered the intellectual revolution which is at the heart of so much of modern thought and belief, Jacob recasts it as a bulwark against a radicalism that might more correctly be seen as the inspiration for later Enlightenment thinkers. Newtonian enlightenment, Jacob insists, far from preparing the ground for the deists of the Enlightenment was seen by its participants as a vast holding operation against materialism and its concomitant republicanism.⁵

In England, Jacob contends, Newtonian natural philosophy was championed by those sections of society who saw their interests represented and safeguarded by a conservative Whig government and the moderate Anglicanism of the Low Church episcopacy. Jacob persuasively argues that early Newtonians, liberal Anglicans, presented the great man's system and their natural religion as 'justification for the pursuit of "sober self-interest" and for the maintenance of property and social hierarchy within a cosmically ordered, regulated and stable market society.' Newtonianism naturalised a political doctrine that ordered society according to the mechanical laws of balanced government rather than the arbitrary will of an absolute ruler, yet at the same time it reinforced the notion of a natural hierarchy necessary to both the operation of the universe and the functioning of society. In

⁴Jacob's analysis of the nature of radicalism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century has been touched upon very briefly in chapter 3 of this thesis, in the broader context of her discussion of the connection between the 'world natural' and the 'world politick'. In this chapter, her contention that philosophical radicalism translated into political radicalism is examined in relation to the neo-Harringtonians.

⁵See *The Radical Enlightenment* and *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, passim. The version of Enlightenment history Jacob is reacting against is that presented by those such as Cassirer and Westfall.

this way it was able to present both High Church Tory adherents of the doctrine of divine right as well as republicans, of whatever hue, as dangerous subversives who threatened the constitutional balance of the nation and therefore its liberty and prosperity. Newton's followers, Jacob argues, 'preached his science and natural philosophy, with Newton's consent, as the philosophical underpinning of a social and political vision'.⁶

It is a weighty assertion and one which is only partly supported by the evidence. Whilst Jacob presents a valuable re-evaluation of Newtonianism, and her characterisation of it as a politically and socially conservative force appears borne out by an examination of contemporary texts and manuscripts, she would seem to have been rightly criticised for claiming too large an ideological role for science in the eighteenth century. Equally, however, it would be a mistake to relegate science to a position of minor social and political influence.⁷ Political pamphleteers of the period, as well as philosophers and scientists, persistently imbued Newtonianism with social, political and moral meaning and actively employed it as a tool in ideological debate. In *The Newtonian System of the World*, Desagliers, a prominent Newtonian and supporter of the Whig administration, explicitly and relentlessly drove home the parallel between the physical and political worlds,

⁶M.C. Jacob, 'Newtonian Science and the Radical Enlightenment', *Vistas in Astronomy*, 32 (1979), 545-55, at 547.

⁷Roy Porter has criticised Jacob's claim that science was an 'essential' weapon in the eighteenth century ideological armoury for explicating and legitimating economic and political relations. See 'Review', *Social History*, 31 (1978), 246-9. In doing so he provides a necessary corrective to Jacob's over-extension of her thesis. However, he travels too far in the opposite direction by ignoring the way in which science was harnessed to political debate and formed a significant component of the ideological battle between the ancients and moderns.

pointing up the symmetry between two perfect systems, demonstrated by Newton in one case and Walpole in the other:

I have consider'd *Government* as a *Phaenomenon*, and look'd upon that Form of it to be most perfect, which did most nearly resemble the Natural Government of our *System*, according to the Laws settled by the *All-wise* and *Almighty Architect* of the Universe ... The *limited Monarchy*, whereby our Liberties, rights and Privileges are so well secured to us, as to make us happier than all the Nations round about us, seems to be a lively Image of our System; and the Happiness that we enjoy under *His* present Majesty's Government, makes us sensible that ATTRACTION [universal gravity] is now as universal in the Political, as the Philosophical World.⁸

It is hardly surprising that some High Church Tories chose to reject a Newtonian order which validated political and religious principles to which they were opposed. In John Hutchinson's natural philosophy, however, as C.B. Wilde has shown, they found a system which represented their interests and vision. Hutchinson's system, like that of Toland and his associates but most unlike that of Newton, was self-sufficiently mechanical, a perpetual motion machine which functioned without the intervention of God.⁹ At the same time, Hutchinson believed the bible was philosophically true in every detail and that Hebrew contained the key to all knowledge, natural and spiritual. His physico-theology was emphatically Christo-centric and Trinitarian and offered a defence of theological tenets which High Church Anglicans felt were under attack from Socinians and Arians as well as Dissenters. He claimed Newtonian philosophy was a perversion of knowledge found in Genesis and that all which was true in

⁸J.T. Desaguliers, *The Newtonian System of the World, The Best Model of Government* (London, 1728), pp. iii-v.

⁹The marriage in Hutchinsonianism of a mechanical system more radical than Newton's - in which an immanent God had no place - and political conservatism would tend to give the lie to Jacob's somewhat simplistic equation. Of course, it also runs counter to a commonly recognised pattern in which organic rather than mechanical theories of nature are seen as lending themselves to a traditional, hierachical perspective.

Newtonianism was derived from that source. His system, he insisted, demonstrated the scriptural origins of the doctrine of the Trinity and showed how it could be empirically verified in nature. Using scripture he also mounted a defence of divine right and, although Hutchinsonians claimed they stood apart from party divisions, the political implications of their system was obvious to their opponents. Whilst the Whigs held power Hutchinsonians were never preferred to positions of influence.¹⁰

Wilde considers his work provides indirect support to Jacob's argument that Latitudinarians were committed to defending the Whig constitution and used Newtonianism as its philosophical underpinning. He does not touch on Jacob's analysis of the opposition between radicals and Latitudinarians. However, it is here that Jacob's thesis breaks down. Her presentation of Newtonianism as a force of conservatism rather than as a progenitor of Enlightenment ideals seems eminently convincing. However she is completely unconvincing in her portrayal of English philosophic radicals as political radicals and in her representation of Latitudinarian Newtonians as a homogenous mass who stood four square against them. Her analysis ignores a rich diversity of opinion within both groups as well as important points of convergence between Low Churchmen and radicals. She presents not merely a simplified but a misleading picture when she argues '[j]ust as the science, natural religion and political ideology of the Newtonians was of a piece, so too ... radical critics of the *status quo* articulated an alternative vision that

¹⁰See C.B. Wilde, 'Hutchinsonianism Natural Philosophy and Religious controversy in Eighteenth Century Britain', *History of Science*, 18 (1980), 1-24.

encompassed prescriptions for political action, a social program based upon scientific methodology and an entirely new religion of nature.'¹¹

Jacob draws a picture of radical Whigs doubly disillusioned and disaffected. On the one hand, she argues, they were critical of the course taken by their party leaders once in power, believing they had betrayed their 'Revolution Principles' of balanced government and civil liberty. Similarly, it was clear to them, she believes, that the scientific revolution's principle of unfettered rational enquiry had been circumscribed by the Latitudinarian counteroffensive against materialism of the kind propounded by Hobbes and Spinoza. Materialist systems were seen by their opponents as undermining existing hierarchies of power and, therefore, were perceived as a threat not just to the position of the established Church but also to the nation's social and political order.

Jacob's radicals include Anthony Collins, Matthew Tindal, John Trenchard and, pre-eminently, John Toland, yet none of these subscribed to the democratic or levelling programme she seeks to ascribe to them. Indeed they vehemently denied any such aim. They denied it not to deflect the criticism of opponents, who were quick to damn them in the eyes of the public as republicans, but because they were all committed to a Whig government which they believed, despite its imperfections, offered their countrymen the only realistic prospect of religious, political and economic freedom.¹² Toland, therefore, apparently found no

¹¹'Newtonian Science and the Radical Enlightenment', 548.

¹²There is an obvious logic to Jacob's argument. Men who denied a hierarchy of spirit and matter and who viewed the universe as mere undifferentiated matter, differently modified, in a ceaseless

contradiction in holding to the socially and politically conservative views of his day whilst entertaining a deeply radical philosophical belief.

It is incorrect to argue, as both Pocock and Jacob do, that Toland and his associates should be seen as adamant opponents of successive Whig administrations and of the socio-economic changes brought about in the wake of the financial revolution of the late seventeenth century.¹³ To do so misreads the issues which were of central importance to them, chief amongst which was religious liberty and toleration. For Toland liberty meant essentially liberty of conscience. In its train followed other liberties, amongst which he numbered a free press and free trade, but fundamentally he defined liberty as the absence of restraint rather than in terms of the civic humanist model of man's freedom to fulfill his role as a political animal. Robert Sullivan is right in saying that Toland's work incorporated both negative and positive concepts of liberty and they interpenetrated rather than coexisted.¹⁴ However, there is also a subtle but important difference between the way Toland employed these two concepts. Whilst negative liberty constituted the substance of his belief he, like his contemporaries, dressed it in the rhetoric of positive liberty. That it was at bottom empty rhetoric is apparent from the ease with which the embodiments of positive liberty, frequent elections and a citizen militia, were sacrificed to negative liberty, that is to freedom of conscience.

motion of decay and reconstitution might reasonably be expected to translate a belief in matter devoid of essential distinction into a belief in a society equally devoid of distinction. Unfortunately for Jacob's thesis, however, and as Trenchard and Gordon never tired of telling their readers, men seldom reason according to the rules of strict logic, especially where their interests are engaged.

¹³It must be emphasised that although Pocock and Jacob represent those they style 'radicals' as ideological opponents of the Whig order, they offer different interpretations of the basis of that opposition. Pocock, unlike Jacob, never suggests that their philosophic radicalism correlated with a belief in republican government on a democratic model.

¹⁴See R.E. Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 161.

Like Dutch republicans, Toland saw toleration as the spring of economic prosperity and his arguments echoed those of Johan and Pieter de la Court. Both he and they insisted that persecution drove out industrious God-fearing and law abiding men, who chose conscience over hypocrisy. Following the de la Courts, he argued it allowed more tolerant nations, who offered religious refugees a haven, to reap the benefit of their labour and wealth. Or where heavy fines were exacted for nonconformity, persecution acted as a disincentive to industry. It also restricted man in the search for religious truth, which could only be pursued through the exercise of his reason:

The *Liberty* of the Understanding is yet a nobler Principle than that of the Body, if this be not a Distinction (as we say) without a Difference; and where there is no Liberty of *Conscience* there can be no Civil Liberty, no Incouragement for Industry, no proper means of rendering the Contry populous, no possibility of Men's freely informing themselves concerning the true Religion, nor any Refuge or Protection for the Distrest, which is the greatest Glory of free Governments.¹⁵

For Toland and most of his fellow freethinkers, liberty was closely bound up with the notion of man as a reasoning, autonomous individual and not primarily as a citizen. They viewed liberty principally in terms of religious or intellectual freedom, the liberty to think as one chose and to express one's opinions without persecution or restraint and without discrimination, such as that suffered by Dissenters under the Test Acts. Matthew Tindal championed freedom of the press not merely because he saw it as a safeguard of political liberty but because he

¹⁵John Toland, *Anglia Libera* (London, 1701), p. 100. See also Pieter de la Court, *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick of Holland and West-Friesland*, pp. 65-6, 81. Toland, more magnanimous than most of his fellow Commonwealthmen, advocated tolerance not merely for Dissenters but also Jews, atheists, Unitarians, Mohammedans and even loyal Catholics. See Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthmen* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 11.

believed it to be the only defence of liberty of conscience. He and other neo-Harringtonians valued political liberty for instrumental reasons rather than because they viewed it as the means by which man exhibited virtue and thereby achieved what as a political animal he had been framed to achieve. As freethinkers first and Commonwealthmen second, they supported the idea of political liberty and a 'republic' on the British model of balanced government because it offered a man greater freedom to exercise his reason and therefore to realise more fully that aspect of his nature which defined him as man. The greatest enjoyment, or fulfilment, rational and sociable creatures were capable of, Tindal argued, was the employment of their thoughts on what they pleased and to be able to communicate them freely, 'herein, consists the Dignity and Freedom of Human Nature, without which no other Liberty can be secure'.¹⁶ That the neo-Harringtonians were prepared to sacrifice the 'Country' principles ascribed to them in order to secure this end indicates where their priorities lay.

Pocock presents Toland and his fellow radicals as 'Country ideologists in the full sense of the term', vehemently opposed to standing armies, placemen, government corruption and a burgeoning national debt.¹⁷ Yet although Toland inveighed against all of these at one time or another he was also prepared to countenance them, or at least to turn a blind eye, when the need arose. In 1717, and on into 1718, he felt able to set aside his opposition to the principle of a standing army and remained mute in the face of the Whig ministry's refusal to reduce the size of land

¹⁶Matthew Tindal, 'Of the Liberty of the Press', *Four Discourses* (London, 1709), p. 319.

¹⁷See J.G.A. Pocock, 'Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 22 (1965), 548-83, at 574.

forces expanded in response to the Jacobite danger exposed by discovery of the Gyllenburg plot.¹⁸ However his reticence may perhaps be explained by reference to the turmoil caused by a split in the Whig ministry in 1717 and his consequent concern to bolster an administration under attack from both Tories and renegade Whigs.¹⁹ Walpole had broken with Sunderland and Stanhope over foreign policy, resigning his position at the head of the Treasury, and together with Townshend had retreated into opposition. He joined with the Tories over the standing army issue and damned himself in the eyes of many Whigs by opposing the Bill introduced by Stanhope for the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Act and the nullification of the Test and Corporation Acts. Toland chose to support Sunderland and Stanhope and therefore refrained at this juncture from adding his voice to the 'Country' opposition to a standing army.²⁰ In *The Second Part of the State Anatomy*, he criticised the opposition ruse of resurrecting and reprinting anti-standing army literature dating from William's reign and implied that whilst such a stance was justified in earlier years present circumstances demanded a different response.²¹

¹⁸Molesworth, another stalwart critic of standing armies also recanted. In a Commons debate in 1718, when he spoke on the side of government in support of the maintenance of a professional fighting force, he suffered the indignity of hearing extracts from his *An Account of Denmark*, in which he attacked standing armies, quoted back at him.

¹⁹For an account of the Whig split see *The Growth of Parliamentary Parties*, pp. 161-8.

²⁰Anthony Collins, like Toland, also supported the Mutiny Bill introduced by the ministry, and opposed by Walpole, in January 1717. In a letter to his friend Desmaizeaux, dated 24 February, Collins writes of news received from Toland that such progress had been made by the Bill that its success was almost certainly assured. He goes on to express incredulity at the lies told about the Bill, including the rumour that it was an attempt to quarter the army on Tory innkeepers. See *Letters to M. Des Maizeaux*, British Library, MS 4282, f.141, letter dated 25 February 1717.

²¹John Toland, *The Second Part of the State Anatomy* (London, 1717), p. 33.

Tindal, his fellow freethinker and 'commonwealthman', also threw his weight behind the ministry and launched an excoriating attack on Walpole in *The Defection Consider'd*. In this tract he represented the defectors as traitors who, by dividing the Whigs, had revived the hopes of the Pretender and therefore necessitated the Septennial Act. Walpole was accused of '*Luciferian Pride*' and ingratitude and compared to an earlier sower of discord amongst the Whigs, Robert Harley. The 'two R[obert]s', as Tindal dubbed them, are judged to be made in the same pattern, self-serving and unprincipled, as proved by their desertion of the Dissenters, despite promises to repeal discriminatory Acts.²²

Tellingly, some years earlier, Toland and other habitués of the Grecian Inn had also remained silent in the face of the struggle between Whigs and Tories over the proposed place provisions in the 1705 Regency Bill. Their silence occurred at a time when to speak out would have served only to add to the rising crescendo of anti-Whig sentiment which threatened to engulf the government. Godolphin's moderate administration had come under sustained attack from those members of his party who felt he had betrayed both them and the Church, following a general election which had seen parliamentary gains for the Whigs. The offensive reached a pitch with the introduction of a motion by High Church Tories on the theme of 'The Church in Danger', calling into question the administration's commitment to

²²See Matthew Tindal, *The Defection Consider'd, and the Designs of those, who divided the Friends of the Government, set in a True Light* (London, 1717). By 1722, and in the wake of the discovery of the Atterbury plot, Tindal had changed his tune and, in *A Defense of our present Happy Establishment and the Administration Vindicated*, was supporting Walpole's ministry against attacks from critics. One of Tindal's targets was *Cato's Letters*, however by this point 'Cato' had also changed tack, realising that he was merely supplying ammunition to the Tories at a time when the threat of a Jacobite rebellion had become tangible once again.

safeguarding the position of the Anglican establishment.²³ Toland's *The Memorial of the State of England In Vindication of the Queen, the Church, and the Administration* is a response to this Tory onslaught and specifically a reply to James Drake's pamphlet, *The Memorial of the Church of England*. Toland's answer to Drake defended Godolphin, praising his 'incomparable management and zeal for the Church', and lauded Sunderland as the 'ablest *Statesman* of his Time'.²⁴ Brushing aside any suggestions that the Dissenters represented any danger to the Church, he argued they desired only a toleration, which is what they deserved as loyal subjects. The *Memorial*, therefore, indicates that Toland was prepared to set aside his opposition to placemen in 1705 in order to confront what he saw as the more pressing threat posed by the ambition of the High Church party, whose members were attempting to work the nation into a fever over the supposed danger to the Church as a means of precipitating a backlash against Dissenters and Whigs, who were represented by Tories as being synonymous.

So too, frequent elections, another key plank of the neo-Harringtonian programme elucidated by Pocock, may have been a goal close to the heart of Toland and his fellow 'radicals'. Yet both he and they were prepared to abandon it, at least temporarily, in 1716 in the hope that by allowing the Whig administration time to implement legislation opposed by High Church Tories, a greater proportion of the nation would enjoy the religious and civil liberties which were then the preserve of members of the established Church. In the *State Anatomy* Toland supplied

²³For an account of the events of 1705 see *The Growth of Parliamentary Parties*, pp. 105-7.

²⁴John Toland, *The Memorial of the State of England In Vindication of the Queen, the Church, and the Administration* (London, 1705), pp. 66, 82.

justifications for the introduction of the Septennial Act. However, at the same time, he reminded the government that it must now follow through and fulfil the expectations of those Whigs who gave their vote to the Bill because they believed it would result in measures to safeguard further the Church and the state from the 'popish faction' and ensure that the Dissenters were eased of hardships and bars to office.²⁵ Prior to a vote on the Act, Walter Moyle, Trenchard's collaborator on the opposition side of the pamphlet wars over standing armies in the last decade of the eighteenth century, wrote confidently to Horatio Walpole:

No motion was at first treated with more coldness, the politicians of the Grecian and the neighbouring coffee-houses, fired with uncommon warmth, bellow'd aloud against it, but time and good arguments make them espouse the quite contrary opinion; you may depend on it, this bill in spite of all the drunken mercenary borough's letters, petitions, and remonstrances will be carried through the House of Commons by a considerable majority.²⁶

Pocock does not ignore the backing given by prominent 'commonwealthmen' to the Septennial Act and indeed mentions that Molesworth, Toland and Trenchard all accepted it mutely. However he fails to put their acceptance of the Act into any meaningful context, choosing to gloss over it. Discussing 'Cato's' stance in favour of frequent elections, Pocock remarks that 'nothing is said [in *Cato's Letters*] of the fact that Trenchard had supported the Septennial Act in 1717'.²⁷ It might be observed in turn that Pocock has nothing to say about why Trenchard should have been moved seemingly to compromise his principles. For Pocock to do so,

²⁵See John Toland, *State Anatomy* (London, 1717), pp. 40-1.

²⁶Mr. Moyle to Horace Walpole, April 20 1716, *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole*, ed. William Cox, 3 vols. (London, 1798), II, p. 62. After the vote Moyle wrote again to Horace Walpole: 'It must be own'd the whiggs when it was first propos'd did not relish it at all, but these arguments and the necessity of the times converted them ... [I]t is now evident that they should like what they have done the better, because there is not a Jacobite who does not rail aloud against it, which confesses a disappointment and that we have broke their schemes.', II, pp. 62-4.

however, would risk admitting the possibility that the position of Trenchard, and that of his associates, towards the Whig establishment was more nuanced than his neo-Harringtonian thesis would suggest. They were all periodic critics of Whig government but they were not ideologically opposed to the emergent status quo and the changes wrought by the financial revolution which had been launched in the late seventeenth century.

As Pocock would have it, Toland and his fellow neo-Harringtonians fiercely denounced the transition from a society based on landed property, the function of which was to maintain the reality of personal autonomy, liberty and virtue, to one defined by the morally and politically corrupting influence of mobile property. Yet Toland never aligned himself on the side of the landed interest in opposition to the money men of the City. On the contrary, a sizeable proportion of the City's financial community were Dissenters, whose cause Toland consistently championed throughout his career. He dedicated his edition of Harrington's works to the municipal authorities and declared the constitution of the Bank of England to be the embodiment of Harrington's commonwealth.²⁸ One of his chief patrons was Sir Robert Clayton, a prominent Whig financier and a director of the Bank of England. It was on the advice of another notable City figure, Sir Theodore Janssen, a wealthy Tory public creditor, that Toland borrowed a not inconsiderable

²⁷*Machiavellian Moment*, p. 473.

²⁸Pocock does note the dedication included in Toland's edition of the works of Harrington. However, he dismisses it as doubtless an instance of Toland 'hedging his political bets' – a plausible interpretation. Less plausibly, he characterises it as indicative of the moral ambivalence about commerce and credit felt by eighteenth century men: 'It is evident also that they were conceptualizing their common experience of a new politics and economics in ways which left them acutely aware that change was going on in both the material and the moral world, and that their

sum in order to invest in the South Sea Company, in the hope that his foray into stockjobbing would secure him an annuity sufficient to allow him a measure of financial independence.²⁹ Both he and his fellow 'commonwealthman' Molesworth suffered badly when the bubble burst and the sting of personal loss is likely to have added edge to the Viscount's sustained and voluble attack on the Company's directors and those ministers who shielded them. Like Trenchard and Gordon, Toland and Molesworth objected to the lack of government policing of financial markets, particularly to their use as a vehicle for Court patronage, not to the idea of the markets themselves.

It is also difficult to justify the view that the neo-Harringtonians were ideologically opposed to the Whig establishment in the face of evidence that they were ready not only to rally to its defence in time of need but to serve it actively and to solicit Court leaders to obtain preferment. Whilst other Whigs scorned Harley after he moved during Anne's reign to the head of the Court party, both Molesworth and Toland retained their association with him. In the case of Toland, he continued to offer Harley his services and to petition him for a reward for past services undertaken on the minister's behalf. Yet even as a supplicant he felt it necessary to remind Harley of what he took to be a shared commitment to religious toleration, claiming in a letter to the minister that he could not imagine 'that you should not strenuously support the legal Toleration, ay and the general Naturalization too, in their utmost latitude', these being 'the main springs and secrets of making any

means of evaluating such changes led to a profound consciousness of moral ambiguity.', *Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 449-50.

²⁹See *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, pp. 164, 13 and 37.

country flourish in wealth and Learning, in arts and arms.' He may have remained loyal to Harley in part out of ambition and self-interest but he also did so, and thereby appeared to collude in a betrayal of Country ideals, because he believed the Court leader had changed his party but not his principles. For Toland, Harley still therefore promised to hold out the best hope for securing those goals to which he was most ardently attached. On these he refused to compromise and, in the same letter to Harley, he identified his guiding principles:

The special ones of usefully serving your Lordship, and securing a competent maintenance to my self, are supposed of course. But the general ones with me are unalterable and indispensable, are Civil Liberty, religious Toleration, and the Protestant Succession ... To obviate any misunderstanding, my LORD, I mean no more by Liberty than a government of Laws and not of will, particularly our own excellent constitution of King, Lords and Commons.³⁰

Contrary to the view presented by Jacob, it appears clear that the ideological implications of Toland's pantheism, a term first coined by him, did not preclude him from being an unwavering supporter of the Protestant succession. Although he lent his pen to the campaign against standing armies in the closing years of the seventeenth century, he was consistent in his endorsement of the Revolution Settlement and accompanied Lord Macclesfield on his mission to Hanover in 1701 to secure the succession.³¹ It seems unnecessary for Jacob to attempt to excuse as a weakness borne of impecuniosity the apparent venality of Toland and his fellow radicals in accepting employment or favours from Whig ministers. On some

³⁰See John Toland, 'A memorial for the Most Honourable the Earl of *** Concerning A *Scheme of Coalition*' and 'Another memorial for the Most Honourable the Earl of ***, December 17 1711', John Toland, *Miscellaneous Works*, 2 vols. (London, 1747), II, pp. 230, 226. See also *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, p. 155.

³¹Rosalie L. Colie describes Toland as 'one of the most powerful of the regular Whig pamphleteers working for William III' in 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', 37.

occasions self-interest and principle find themselves in accord and for those who believed in and urged toleration, however circumscribed, Whig ministers appeared to hold out most hope.

There is nothing in Toland's writings which indicates, as Jacob suggests, that his pantheism formed a philosophical foundation for a democratic theory of government. In fact he called for a less rather than a more representative political system than currently existed, arguing that no-one should be chosen to represent a county or borough except those who had either the possession or reversion of a considerable estate. He supported the previous Qualifying Act passed by parliament and encouraged members to introduce a further Act, restricting the vote to men of sufficient means to discharge their obligations to the parish.³²

Anthony Collins, freethinker and fellow member of the Grecian coterie, likewise displayed none of the ideological opposition to the Court party which is central to Pocock's neo-Harringtonian thesis. He shared his associates' commitment to the Protestant succession and religious toleration and was therefore prepared to support a Whig administration which appeared ready to act in pursuit of those ends. Presumably this is why he exhibited no embarrassment at seeking to be marked, and thereafter rewarded in some manner, for the support he proffered the government. Writing to his friend Desmaizeaux he enquired whether Lord Parker 'took notice of the zeal I showed at the last assizes at Chelmsford for the King and

³²See John Toland, *Governing by Partys* (London, 1721), pp. 166, 174.

government.’³³ Collins was a Justice of the Peace, hence his reference to the Chelmsford assizes, and also involved himself in local politics. In both roles he adopted a notably conservative line which belies Jacob’s assertion that the Grecian ‘college’ were prepared to act out their radical politics.³⁴

Whilst obviously it would be foolish to deny that radical Whigs were critical of the Whig establishment, and sometimes vehemently so, equally the evidence can not be ignored that both groups of Whigs shared the same politically and socially conservative vision and that this united them even in the face of fears about the abuse of power. Where they differed significantly is that the radicals, in contrast to Court Whigs, were much more committed to religious toleration, and correspondingly much more wary of High Church ambitions, and were prepared to be outspoken in voicing their opinion.

Even here however, on the issue of toleration, the radicals quite often found themselves at one with those Jacob casts as their Latitudinarian opponents. Quite inexplicably she includes Benjamin Hoadly, famously Bishop of Bangor, in the ranks of these opponents. Yet Hoadly’s strident Erastianism and sustained support for toleration made him a heroic figure to the radicals and by the same token a figure of opprobrium to High Church Tories. It was largely Gordon’s spirited defence of Hoadly, following the ferocious High Church response to his sermon in 1717 on the text ‘My kingdom is not of this World’, that brought the young Scot to

³³BL, MS 4282, f.121, Collins to Desmaizeaux, 22 September 1716.

Trenchard's attention. Both authors thereafter scarcely entered print without including some mention of the bishop's merits and their fellow radicals were barely less stinting in their praise. Toland was vocal in his defence of the 'Illustrious' bishop, declaring he had been defamed purely as a consequence of having 'nobly ingag'd in the cause of Mankind, in the cause of Christianity, in that of the Reformation, and in that of the Laity.'³⁵ Tindal revered him as 'the strenuous assertor of our religious, as well as civil Rights' whilst Collins, in a letter to Desmaizeaux, expressed himself pleased with Hoadly and with the controversy he had ignited by his sermon, hoping it had opened the eyes of at least a few to the knowledge that the clergy were intent on nothing except wealth and power.³⁶ All of the radicals mentioned were also expansive in their praise for leading Latitudinarians such as Tillotson and Chillingworth. Arguably this might in part be seen as an attempt to cloak themselves and their cause in an aura of respectability, and at the same time to infuriate critics, but they also appear to have borne a genuine respect for men who distinguished themselves as advocates of toleration.³⁷

³⁴For Collins' involvement in local Whig politics see James O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins, the Man and His Works* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 126-8, 190. For Jacob see 'Newtonian Science and the Radical Enlightenment', 546.

³⁵John Toland, *Reflections on Sacheverell's Sermon* (London, 1710), p.13 and *Nazarenus* (London, 1718), p. xxiv.

³⁶Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London, 1731), p. 193; and Collins to Desmaizeaux, 1 July 1717, BL MS 4282, f.137. Although Hoadly dealt a critical reply to Collins' *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* the criticism is perhaps slightly disingenuous. It was not uncommon for those suspected or accused of heterodox views to assert their orthodoxy by distancing themselves from noted freethinkers.

³⁷Judging by the response of the author of *Queries Recommended to the Authors of the Late Discourses of Free Thinking* (London, 1713), p. 32, Collins must have enraged many by counting Chillingworth and Tillotson with Hobbes as great freethinkers. Provocatively he pointed to Tillotson as the figure whom 'all English free-thinkers own as their head', *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* (London, 1713), p. 143. A few of the many instances of favourable allusions to Tillotson and Chillingworth include: Tindal, *Four Discourses*, p. 274, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, pp. 28, 143; Collins, *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, pp. 26, 67-9, 143; Toland, 'Letter to Rev. Dr.

Nor is it valid for Jacob to represent Latitudinarian critics of Toland and other freethinkers as uniformly orthodox and representative of the Church establishment. Most significantly she ignores the divisions within Anglicanism and the intra-denominational struggle between High and Low Churchmen for ascendancy and establishment status. Instead she chooses to depict the Low Church position as a steady consolidation of power, which saw from the 1688 Revolution onwards all ecclesiastical preferments brought within its control. Yet she fails to mention that the Newtonians Samuel Clarke and William Whiston themselves came under suspicion of Arianism and were targeted by the Tory laity and the High Church dominated Lower House of Convocation, who regarded their views as dangerously subversive. Ironically, both men, criticised and sidelined for preferment by the establishment to which, according to Jacob, they belonged, discovered defenders in an unlikely quarter, amongst their intellectual adversaries, although their reputations were likely to have suffered rather than gained in the process and they were unlikely to have been grateful for the assistance. Collins defended Clarke from accusations of atheism and apparently both he and Tindal met socially with Clarke to discuss matters of religion.³⁸ Moreover, Tindal appears to have respected his adversary sufficiently to quote approvingly in *Christianity as Old as the Creation* from Clarke's Boyle lectures. In the case of Whiston, Collins defended his right to free speech, while disagreeing with much of what he had to say, and sought to vindicate him from the condemnation of the Lower House of

Hooper', *An Historical Account of the Life and Writings of the late Eminently Famous Mr. John Toland*, ed. E. Curll (London, 1722), p. 88.

³⁸See Anthony Collins, *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, p. 67 and *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, p. 265.

Convocation.³⁹ Trenchard and Gordon also added their voice to Whiston's defence when he came under attack for his anti-Trinitarian views.⁴⁰

The picture is not nearly as black and white as Jacob would have it painted. Politically her radicals were little if any more radical than the Latitudinarians and it is difficult to see how they differed in terms of fundamental ideology from those such as Hoadly, a confirmed Erastian and supporter of the Whig order. The real battlelines are clear when one looks at a defining issue such as the Bangorian controversy, where the radicals and Low Church Whigs came out in favour of Hoadly and High Church Tories weighed in against him. It has also to be realised that philosophically Latitudinarianism, by its very definition, constituted a wide church of belief. It may not have stretched so wide as to admit the radical philosophy of Collins, Tindal and especially Toland, despite their protestations that they remained within the broad ambit of the Church, but it was not, as witnessed by Clarke and Whiston, the bastion of theological conservatism represented by Jacob.

Unfortunately once it is accepted that those styled radicals by historians were so only in terms of their philosophy, and not their politics, it is necessary to reject the thesis put forward by Jacob and others, intellectually satisfying though it might be, that a correlation exists between the two.⁴¹ It is true there does appear to be a continuity between the neo-Harringtonians and Puritan 'radicals', as suggested by

³⁹See *Discourse of Free-Thinking*, p. 36.

⁴⁰See, for example, Thomas Gordon, *The Tryal of William Whiston, for Defaming and Denying the Holy Trinity, Before the Lord Chief Justice Reason* (London, 1734).

Jacob and Pocock. They do indeed share a common anti-clericalism and a reliance on personal judgement, as opposed to the weight of authority. However, it should be noted that this legacy was not an exclusively Puritan one and that the Latitudinarians were heir to it too. At the same time, Puritanism contained a number of aspects that the freethinkers would have found completely incompatible with their own views, most obviously an unquestioning belief in revelation.

On this issue and on others such as predestination and, crucially, toleration there is a line of continuity not with Puritan thought but, conversely, with that of the Cambridge Platonists and with their intellectual successors the Latitudinarians. In opposition to Puritan enthusiasm the Cambridge Platonists stressed the role of reason and displayed an abhorrence, shared by Toland and other freethinkers, of all forms of fanaticism as well as a contempt for superstition.⁴² The Cambridge school and most of the Grecian Inn group elevated reason to the position of man's ruling authority both in life and in the interpretation of scripture. There is also a parallel between, on the one hand, the Cambridge Platonists' rejection of the doctrine of predestination and their emphasis instead on the value of good works and a moral life and, on the other, the concern of freethinkers that men should focus on the issue of morality rather than doctrinal differences.⁴³ Similarly, in common with the freethinkers, the Cambridge Platonists were deeply committed to toleration and attempted to mediate differences and to assuage the bitterness

⁴¹Whilst it is argued a correlation does not exist between philosophical and political radicalism in early eighteenth century England this is not to deny a connection might be found later in the eighteenth century and in a larger European context.

⁴²See, for example, John Trenchard, *The Natural History of Superstition* (London, 1709).

between Calvinists and Laudians. As Bishop Burnet observed of the Cambridge men:

They continued to keep a good correspondence with those who had differed from them in opinion ... and allowed a great freedom both in philosophy and divinity. From whence they were called men of Latitude; and upon this, men of narrower Thoughts and fiercer tempers fastened upon the name of Latitudinarians.⁴⁴

Ralph Cudworth and Henry More, in an echo of the Dutch Arminians whose aims they shared and with whom they had some correspondence, also stressed the social and economic benefits of toleration. They argued, against popular prejudice, that toleration ameliorated rather than exacerbated civil strife and that it allowed trade to flourish. The character and progress of Latitudinarianism and Dutch Arminianism to a large extent mirrored each other.⁴⁵ Both were opposed on political as well as theological grounds by their more powerful co-religionists, the High Church party in England and the Orthodox Calvinist Church in the United Provinces. In each case support for a wide toleration and a strict separation of the Church from the state placed them at odds with the deeply conservative and authoritarian dominant body of opinion within their national Church. Inevitably they were attacked for their advocacy of toleration, which it was claimed, perhaps not without foundation, encouraged the spread of heresies such as Socinianism. The long and close association between Latitudinarians and Dutch Arminians certainly opened up a wider area in which unorthodox ideas could cross-fertilise

⁴³As already noted, Trenchard and Gordon differed from their Grecian Inn colleagues in being more sceptical about man's capacity for reason. They were agreed, however, that man had reason, or common sense, enough to understand the fundamental tenets of Christianity.

⁴⁴See Norman Sykes, *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 21-2.

⁴⁵For a fuller discussion of the relationship between Latitudinarianism and Dutch Arminianism, see chapter 5 of this thesis.

and germinate. The leading Arminian Limborch, who enjoyed a friendship with Locke, corresponded with both Tillotson and Stillingfleet and Le Clerc, another prominent Arminian, was also closely acquainted with noted Latitudinarian figures.

If antecedents for the Grecian Inn freethinking circle must be found, therefore, they should be looked for amongst contemporary Latitudinarians, with whom they seem to have shared a common lineage. Even in matters of political doctrine, such as passive obedience, after the 1688 Revolution the freethinkers were now more in tune with the Cambridge Platonists than the Puritans, as it was no longer in the interest of the Protestant succession and 'Revolution principles' to encourage rebellion. Tindal was not unusual in arguing:

[I]f paying obedience to the present Government be for the Good and Happiness of the Nation, it must be a Duty in every one to do it ... The paying obedience to those in Possession, is a Doctrine which tends so much to the Interest of human Societies, and of all the particular Members thereof, that even they who oppose it, did they consult their own Happiness, must wish it were true.⁴⁶

Contrary to the arguments put forward by Pocock and Jacob, therefore, there would appear to be no meaningful correlation in the early eighteenth century between political radicalism and deism and, similarly, no distinct line of continuity with Puritanism. Moreover, there is some considerable difficulty in even defining deism in this period. Although there are a set of beliefs commonly understood to constitute 'deism', in practice in the early eighteenth century few of those labelled

⁴⁶Matthew Tindal, 'An Essay Concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, and the duty of Subjects in all Revolutions', *Four Discourses*, p. 24.

deists subscribed to every point or indeed acknowledged themselves to be deists.⁴⁷

Toland, who titled himself a pantheist, never admitted the charge and Collins was equally reluctant to publicly accept a designation that was commonly used as a term of abuse synonymous with that of atheist, although he is said to have privately owned himself a speculative atheist.⁴⁸ The only one of this circle to have confessed himself a deist, and that almost at the end of his life, was Tindal.⁴⁹

In the case of Trenchard, his brand of deism, although he never applied the term to himself, was of a type most unlike that of any of his associates and resembles most closely the thought of another questionable deist, David Hume.⁵⁰ While both rejected revelation neither placed any confidence in reason as a final authority and

⁴⁷Modern historians disagree on whether Toland and his circle should be considered deists at all. Sullivan considers the term too general to have any real value when attributed to the diverse views of freethinkers and Latitudinarians alike. See *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, pp. 204-34. Similarly, David Berman has questioned the validity of the term and, in particular, has argued that Anthony Collins should be regarded as a speculative atheist rather than a deist. On the other hand, Günter Gawlick has suggested, with some justification, that deists of the eighteenth century should be considered on the terms set by their own works, which reveal a number of shared objectives, rather than on the terms set by the criticisms of their opponents. The resulting definition, however, is so wide that it lacks clarity. See 'Hume and the Deists', 133. Eighteenth century deists and their opponents appear to have been equally uncertain in their definitions. John Leland observed that all deists agreed in rejecting revealed religion and professing a regard for natural religion, yet they were far from agreed in their notion of what constituted a natural religion. All deists, he insisted, were united in attempting to subvert revealed religion but disagreed on what should be substituted in its place. See *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers*, 3 vols. (London, 1754), I, pp. 40, 387. In acknowledgement of the difficulties involved in reaching a definition of 'deism' the term 'freethinker' has generally been adopted throughout this chapter, except when referring to other historians' use of the term.

⁴⁸The term 'atheism' was usually employed not actually to signify a disbelief in God but rather a belief in a diminished, non-interventionalist Creator, which effectively meant a belief in a God who was no God at all. For Collins' admission of speculative atheism see David Berman, 'Anthony Collins and the Question of Atheism in the Early Part of the Eighteenth Century', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 75 (1975), 85-102, at 89.

⁴⁹See *John Toland and the Deist Controversy*, pp. 213-15.

⁵⁰Later in the century, both in France and in America, Trenchard and Gordon were widely renowned for their deistic beliefs and their anti-clerical writings were praised and much quoted by radicals. Günter Gawlick has also noted the similarity between Trenchard's peculiar form of deism, if it can be classed as such, and that of Hume. He has rightly observed that Trenchard's *Natural History of Superstition*, virtually ignored by historians of philosophy, invites comparison with Hume's *Natural History of Religion*, 'Hume and the Deists', 138.

arbiter of religious truth. Trenchard, as a fellow admirer of Bayle, would probably have agreed with Hume's contention that Christianity must rest on faith, not on reason. Hume's comment, which comes at the end of his attack on revelation in 'On Miracles', was perhaps not entirely ironic and seems indicative of both his own sceptical approach and that of Trenchard.⁵¹ Both men employed characteristically deistic terminology to discuss the universe.⁵² However, Trenchard's repeated insistence that man can know nothing of God, that His essence is unknowable and His supposed attributes mere human projections, indicates an acceptance that man can not even know if God exists and that belief therefore must rest on faith alone. Trenchard's admission of this is apparent from his argument against Trinitarianism, which occurs amidst the repeated insistence that man can form no distinct idea of God. For, he argues, 'when we say, that we believe there are three persons in the Trinity, and but one God, we must have distinct ideas to the Words *person*, *Trinity*, and *God*'. The obvious implication is that since man can have no distinct idea of God there was no more compelling

⁵¹It is notoriously difficult to theorise on the spiritual beliefs of controversial eighteenth century writers, given their need to resort to contradictory statements and dissimulation in order to protect themselves from the social and penal penalties attached to the expression of unorthodox religious views. Toland gives an indication of the problems freethinkers, ancient and modern, experienced in the dissemination of their work and the strategies they adopted to overcome them. In order to circumvent censorship laws designed as a garrison against truth and erected to protect the power of ecclesiastical and tyrannical civil authorities by keeping the people in ignorance, he argued: 'The Philosophers therefore, and other well-wishers to mankind in most nations, were constrain'd by this holy tyranny to make use of a two-fold doctrine; the one *Popular*, accommodated to the Prejudices of the vulgar, and to the received CUSTOMS or RELIGIONS: the other Philosophical, conformable to the nature of things, and consequently to TRUTH; which, with doors fast shut and under all other precautions, they communicated only to friends of known probity, prudence, and capacity. These they generally call'd the *Exoteric* and *Esoteric*, or the *External* and *Internal* Doctrines.' On the contradictions writers were forced to resort to, he quotes Cicero: '*There are two sorts of books*, says he: *the one popularly written, which they call'd Exoteric; the other more perfectly written, namely the Esoteric, which they left in their Commentaries, or finish'd Pieces.* Hence he rightly concludes, that the same Philosophers *do not always seem to say the same thing*, tho they continu'd of the same opinion; which is as true as Truth itself, of many writers in our own time.', 'Clidophorus', *Tetradymus* (London, 1720), pp. 65-6, 77.

reason for him to believe in such a Being than there was for him to assent to the idea of the Trinity. Trenchard went on to argue that the very word 'God' was meaningless, so lost was it in subjectivity:

All the differences amongst mankind, as to their belief of the deity, are owing to their different conceptions of him; as they disagree in his attributes, in the modes of his operations, and worship him under various images and representations. As to his substance, essence, the manner or *sensorium* of his existence, we neither know nor can know any thing, nor can have any conception about it, and consequently can believe nothing concerning it; and therefore all that we can believe (besides what I above said every man agrees in ['that he has existed from all eternity, and must for ever exist; and that he has made or produced everything else']) is concerning his attributes, and the *modus* wherein he has communicated or represented himself to us: That is, we can only believe in the ideas which we have annexed in our minds to the word *god*; and if we annex different images to the word, we are of a different religion, or rather are atheists to one another, though we call the object of all our worship by the same name. For since, as I have said, we can only worship our own conceptions or images of the deity, or (by new placing the words) the deity under our conceptions and images, if those images be false, we worship only an idol of our own imaginations, and pay divine homage to nothing.⁵³

⁵²As already noted (see chapter 3 of this thesis), Trenchard employed the classic 'watchmaker' analogy. However, he did not use it, as Paley was later to do, as an argument for God from design.

⁵³CL, II, no. 120, p. 836; II, no. 137, pp. 947-8. Elsewhere, in discussing some of the different notions of God held by men through the ages, Trenchard compares the Epicureans and the Stoics. Although he does not say explicitly that he agrees with Epicurus' views, to do so would have laid him open to a charge of atheism, it is clear from what he says in previous letters that his own understanding of the nature of God was close to that which he believed Epicurus to have held: 'The Epicureans thought the deity to be sufficient in his own felicity; and that he did not concern himself with our affairs here below ... They had no notion of what was meant by *wise*, *merciful*, and *just*, when applied to the deity; and thought that these could not be analogous to what was meant by the same qualities in men ... they said, that the deity had no organs, but saw all things intuitively from all eternity, and could not err. So they said, that mercy in men was a passion caused by the feeling or apprehension of the sufferings of others: But they believed that the divinity could have no passions, because no agent could operate upon him, he himself being eternal, and before all things, and producing all things; nor could suffer temporary anguish and uneasiness, always produced by compassion. In like manner, they said, that justice was an adherence to certain rules, dictated by superior powers, or agreed upon by men for their mutual convenience; but no rules could be set to the divinity ... They therefore said, that when those attributes were applied to the deity, nothing could be meant by them, but to express our reverence for him, our admiration of his power, and to sacrifice to him our best conceptions; not that we pretend to define his essence, nor the *modus* of his actions, which are wholly incomprehensible to us.', *ibid.*, II, no. 138, p. 949. Of course, Trenchard did not subscribe to the notion of a plurality of gods and it is interesting that he glosses over this obviously unfortunate aspect, as it would have seemed to him, of Epicurus' thought. He may have concurred with the view expressed by one of the commentators on Epicurus: 'I have observ'd, in my Remarks on the Translation of the First Book of *Lucretius*, and in those on the Fifth, that *Epicurus's* Weakness was such, as to own a Plurality of Gods, tho' he was inwardly convinc'd of the contrary Opinion. *Socrates's* Death and the Fear he had of the *Athenians*, had made him speak after this

Trenchard's lack of confidence in man's ability to find God through reason derived, like Hume, from a naturalistic concept of human nature. Arguing from the sensationalist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke, Trenchard pointed to the subjective 'irrational' nature of what men call reason. The mind and body were inter-related, he argued, and therefore both man's reasoning processes and the actions which followed from them were shaped by the impressions formed by his senses. Free will was an illusion because man's actions were governed by his will and that in turn was directed by his body and his environment. Consequently men reasoned differently from one another, and even from themselves over time, as a result of their different constitutions and circumstances.⁵⁴ The idea, common to Toland and most other freethinkers of the period, that there were fundamental truths accessible to all intelligent men through the exercise of reason was not one which held any credibility for him. Like Hume, he believed men were essentially the playthings of their passions. Experience showed, in Trenchard's opinion, and here he followed Hobbes, that men were not guided to religion by reason but by ignorance and fear, that 'something innate in our Constitution made us easily to be susceptible of wrong Impressions, subject to Pannick Fears, and prone to Superstition and Error'.⁵⁵

Significantly, for both Trenchard and Hume, as for Bayle and Locke, the fact that the truth of Christianity or any other religion was not subject to demonstration was

manner.', *Epicurus's Morals with Comments and Reflections Taken out of several Authors* [trans. John Digby]. Also *Isocrates His Advice to Demonicus, to which is added, an ESSAY on Epicurus's Morals. Written by Monsieur St. Evremond And made English by Mr. Johnson* (London, 1712), p. 82. As to Epicurus' theory of the atomic structure of matter, Trenchard refers to it but does not venture an opinion as to its validity. See *CL*, II, no. 123, pp. 850-1.

a telling argument in favour of toleration. Gawlick is partly correct when he argues that deists were characterised by the aim of sweeping away superstition and priestcraft, intolerance and religious persecution and by placing morality on a footing independent of revelation.⁵⁶ Yet one has only to look at Bolingbroke to see that this will not suffice as a meaningful definition of deism and, if accepted, it would include in its ambit not only Latitudinarians but Bayle, an ardent adversary of deism. Interestingly, the most thoroughgoing advocates of toleration, extending it even to atheists, were not the deistic writers who celebrated reason but Bayle, Trenchard and Hume.⁵⁷ All three argued reason and religion were insufficient to the task of rendering men virtuous, as they were too deeply in thrall to their passions. However those very passions, manifestations of pride, could be operated upon in order to produce a simulation of virtue, which was all society required - religious belief being a matter of individual conscience. As atheists too were men, and shared the nature common to all men, they were no less capable of displaying a socially constructed virtue equal to that of Christians. Indeed all three writers indicated their disgust for centuries of blood spilt in religious conflict by implying a society of atheists would be more virtuous than one composed of Christians.⁵⁸

It would seem, therefore, that there was no necessary correlation in the early eighteenth century between those identified as 'neo-Harringtonians' and deism and

⁵⁴Ibid., II, no. 110, p. 775.

⁵⁵*The Natural History of Superstition*, p. 9

⁵⁶'Hume and the Deists', 133.

⁵⁷Toland, Collins and Tindal all believed atheists, like Catholics, should not be afforded the protection of the state because their views were destructive of society.

⁵⁸See Pierre Bayle, *Miscellaneous Reflections on the Comet*, 2 vols. (London, 1708), I, pp. 281-2, 294; *CL*, II, no. 108, p. 766; David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), IX, pp. 58-62.

that the terms themselves are so imprecise as to render any attempt to establish such a connection invalid. In respect of political belief, none of the freethinkers discussed fit the mould of 'neo-Harringtonianism' and the description 'deist' can only be applied to them with qualification, remembering that Toland deemed himself a pantheist, Collins privately admitted to being a speculative atheist and Trenchard, who omitted to commit himself to any creed beyond the conventional declaration of adherence to the Church of England, retained at least the appearance, and probably was in effect, a sceptic. Rather, what is noteworthy is that these 'commonwealthmen' all shared a deep and abiding commitment to toleration and were prepared, when necessary, to set aside their 'republican' principles in order to attain that goal. Qualified support for the Whig establishment, which offered the most promising prospect of achieving a wide toleration, is therefore the unifying feature of this group of freethinkers and not neo-Harringtonian opposition.

Chapter V

‘Cato’ and Mandeville - Independent Whigs

If a clearer understanding of the ideas which shaped *Cato's Letters* is to be achieved it is necessary to look beyond the classical allusions to be found there and to examine other lines of thought in the *Letters* and the way in which these are connected. It is also necessary to examine other writings by Trenchard and Gordon, especially those contemporaneous with the *Letters*, in order to retrieve a less distorted image of ‘Cato’ and to gain a fuller understanding of wider attitudes in the period towards commerce and virtue. It is particularly illuminating to examine the relationship between ‘Cato’, canonised as chief proselytiser of civic humanist doctrine, and a figure generally considered his antithesis, Mandeville, characterised as Walpolean England’s philosopher and apologist for a corrupt age.¹

Only one historian, H.T. Dickinson, has hinted at any similarities in the thought of ‘Cato’ and Mandeville, suggesting that on some issues - such as charity schools, Societies for the Reformation of Manners and the political pretensions of the clergy - the author of *The Fable of the Bees* can be found in the same camp as ‘such eminent Country Whigs as John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’.² Yet this is a connection roundly repudiated by M.M. Goldsmith who, whilst agreeing with the general accuracy of Dickinson’s description of Mandeville as an ‘independent

¹See, for example, Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle*: ‘Mandeville may also be read in the intellectual context of his own age as an important formulator of new values for post-Revolution England ... [his] achievement was the expression of values that supplanted humanism, appropriate for the emerging social structure.’ Whereas, Kramnick goes on to argue, ‘one of the overriding themes of *Cato's Letters* is a rejection of the new economic order.’, pp. 201-46. See also Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, pp. 116-19.

Whig', is dismissive of the 'infelicitous verbal connection with Trenchard and Gordon', and argues that a dislike of charity schools and the clergy was 'almost all that Mandeville shared with the protagonists of virtue and opposition to the government: John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon'.³ It will be argued in the course of this chapter, however, that, contrary to Goldsmith's contention, and going beyond the tentative link made by Dickinson, there is considerable convergence of thought in the work of Mandeville and that of Trenchard and Gordon.

Dickinson's attempt to counter the common image of Mandeville as a Court Whig by associating him with Trenchard and Gordon, renowned 'commonwealthmen', is supported by more recent scholarship, which indicates that as a young man the author of *The Fable of the Bees* was prepared to act upon his republican sympathies.⁴ In 1690 he was resident in Rotterdam when the Costerman riots broke out, an outburst of violence triggered by the execution of a respected citizen who had been arrested by a tax farmer's agents and was subsequently convicted, unjustly it was claimed, of smuggling. The tax farmer's house was looted by rioters and then, in an escalation of events which appears to have taken on a political dimension, calls began to be made in widely distributed pamphlets for the city's bailiff also to be brought to book for his part in the affair.

²H.T. Dickinson, 'Bernard Mandeville: An 'independent Whig'', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 152 (1976), 559-70, at 565.

³Goldsmith is referring to the fact that Trenchard and Gordon styled themselves 'independent Whigs' and collaborated on the similarly entitled and widely read periodical, *The Independent Whig*. See *Private Vices, Public Benefits*, pp. 104, 122. It has already been argued in previous chapters that Trenchard and Gordon were emphatically not 'protagonists of virtue and opposition'.

⁴See Rudolph Dekker, "'Private Vices, Public Virtues" Revisited: The Dutch Background of Bernard Mandeville', trans. G.T. Moran, *History of European Ideas*, 14 (1992), 481-98. See also Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 857-8.

The bailiff, Jacob van Zwijlen van Nievelt, was a supporter of the House of Orange and deeply unpopular with the anti-Orangist opposition, which included Michael Mandeville and his son, Bernard. Both Mandevilles were mentioned in official reports as having been involved in the outbreak of civil disorder and it was Bernard Mandeville's pamphlets, cruelly lampooning van Zwijlen, which ignited the second round of rioting on 5th October. As well as levelling various scurrilous accusations at the bailiff, Mandeville accused him of being a 'Sanctimonious Atheist', a reference to his religious convictions. Van Zwijlen was an elder in the orthodox Calvinist Reformed Church and the charge recalled the violent and, particularly in Rotterdam, still simmering animosities provoked by the confrontation between the Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants earlier in the century. Central to the dispute between the two groups were the issues of religious toleration and the location of sovereignty within the state.

The Remonstrants' appeal to the States of Holland in 1610 for protection from persecution by the Reformed Church, which enjoyed official status within the state and upheld the authority of the House of Orange, was generally supported by the regents. As chief administrators of the Republic's religiously diverse cities, the regents tended to appreciate the benefits of toleration in maintaining civil order and contributing to commercial prosperity and were inclined to resent attempts by both the stadholderate and the Reformed Church to exercise power arbitrarily.

As a result of the riots and of calls that van Zwijlen be prosecuted for corruption, the provincial government bowed to popular pressure and put him on trial.

However before a judgement could be delivered the stadholder, William III, intervened and removed the case from provincial jurisdiction, ensuring that the bailiff was acquitted and reinstated to office. Having triumphed, van Zwijlen then took revenge on his opponents, including Michael Mandeville and the printer of the 'Sanctimonious Atheist' pamphlet, both of whom were banished from the city without trial. Dekker concludes that it was this reversal of fortune, arising from the Costerman affair, which led Bernard Mandeville to settle in England and that the episode shaped his pessimistic view of human nature.⁵ Be that as it may, more importantly, it would seem, is that this account of Mandeville's young life is instructive in that it indicates a political perspective which remained present in his later work and which was shared by Trenchard and Gordon.

At first it might appear surprising that once established in his adoptive country Mandeville should have turned from being a critic of William of Orange to a supporter.⁶ Yet to do so might be seen as perfectly logical within the framework of concerns which were of over-arching importance to him. He saw that where a Church, be it Roman Catholic, Calvinist, or any other Protestant denomination, enjoyed exclusive privileges and status within a state, and in return reinforced the power of the secular authority, it was individual liberties which suffered.⁷ In the

⁵"'Private Vices, Public Virtues' Revisited', p. 495.

⁶Neither Dickinson or Goldsmith, nor indeed Kramnick, suggests that Mandeville was not a supporter of William. As Goldsmith notes, Mandeville's first known English publication, *The Pamphleteers*, was a defence of William, in verse form, against the carping of those who belittled his achievements. In the poem Mandeville celebrated William's personal virtues and a life spent in opposing French tyranny. See *Private Vices, Public Benefits*, p. 79.

⁷See Mandeville's *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (London, 1732), p. 98. Gordon also regarded Calvinism to be as dangerous as Catholicism, in that it sanctioned resistance to an ungodly government, defined as one which failed to suppress and expunge heresy within its borders. 'It is the power of the Clergy, 'tis their long claws that constitute Popery, render Popery terrible, and are Popery, real Popery, whatever else it be called ... in the

Dutch Republic it was the orthodox Calvinist Church, with its doctrine of religious intolerance and endorsement of passive obedience to a godly prince, which threatened freedom of belief and action.

As stadholder, William was the beneficiary of the Reformed Church's support, a mutually advantageous relationship which enhanced the power of both at the expense of the individual. In England the polarities of power were different. The Anglican Church had been a chief pillar of Charles II's reign and in turn Royalists, and later Tories, saw themselves as the Church's defender. After the Glorious Revolution, and the Whigs' fudged invitation to William to accept the 'vacant' throne, the Church was divided in its support for the new monarch. Nine bishops and over four hundred members of the clergy refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary. High Church Tories were seen as posing a danger to freedom, perceived, or at least portrayed by Whigs, as crypto-Catholics and Jacobites, bound body and soul to the doctrines of apostolic succession and rule by divine right. Moreover, while in the Dutch Republic William shared the same brand of Protestantism as the majority of the population, this was not the case in Anglican England. It makes sense, therefore, that Mandeville should have thrown his support behind William and the Whig party.⁸

proceedings against SERVETUS, CALVIN was a Pope, nay a popish Inquisitor, if it be true, that he was the author of those proceedings.', Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Tacitus*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), p. 132. See also *CL*, II, no. 131, pp. 907-8.

⁸So whilst Mandeville's *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness* (London, 1720) might be seen as a propaganda piece for George I's Whig government, and includes a reference to the 'Genius of William the Third', equally it is a restatement of Arminian beliefs: a rejection of predestination and a plea for religious tolerance and less preoccupation with outward forms of worship.

In an irony of relativism that could hardly have been lost on Mandeville, one might see that William could in the circumstances of one national context take the part of despot and in another play the role of defender of liberty. Indeed Mandeville's politics appear perfectly in keeping with his philosophy, a Pyrrhonian utilitarianism which held that men should be permitted the maximum freedom society could allow in order to live their lives according to their chosen creed, both spiritual and material.⁹ Like Trenchard and Gordon he favoured a republican form of government, or limited monarchy in the case of England, which was less dependent for its legitimacy on the Church, because it allowed men a greater degree of liberty than any other type of rule. Liberty, that is, not in its classical, positive sense but negatively, freedom from constraint.

It would seem a great error, therefore, to trivialise the attitude of Mandeville and 'Cato' towards the clergy as simple 'dislike' and to make light of the suggestion that they might have shared a political perspective. Their anti-clericalism goes to the heart of an ideological concern they held in common, the liberty of the individual. Too often 'Cato's' classical references are taken unquestioningly as an endorsement of a classical concept of virtue.¹⁰

⁹Mandeville was a sceptic in that he believed there was no 'ultimate good', no determining principle discoverable to human reason which would show men how to live their lives. For him, this meant that men should, therefore, be allowed to follow whatever route to happiness best suited them. See *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 330-1; also: 'it is manifest, that when we pronounce Actions good or evil, we only regard the Hurt or benefit the Society receives from them, and not the Person who commits them.', I, p. 244. For the argument that men are differently motivated and that there is no single good life for all, see *The Female Tatler*, 15th, 20th and 24th March 1720. The life of a country gentleman and that of a money-driven merchant are, Mandeville suggests, equally valid.

¹⁰See *Private Vices, Public Benefits*, p. 142. Goldsmith includes Tacitus as one of the ancient writers frequently invoked for this purpose by exponents of the "civic humanist" ideology'. Also see *The Origins of American Politics*, p. 56. Bailyn argues the interpretative discourses prefacing Gordon's translations of Sallust and Tacitus 'were "country" tracts as flamboyant as his periodical pieces'. This is a somewhat odd analysis since the translations were published at a time when

Significantly it is Gordon's championing of a non-classical figure, Oldenbarnevelt, in his translation of Sallust which gives an indication that his political opinions were coloured by concerns which place him, like Mandeville, in the Dutch Hobbesian republican tradition, rather than within the civic humanist paradigm.¹¹ He singled out for praise as an exemplar of virtue 'John Barnevelt', by whom he meant Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, effectively chief minister of the United Provinces under the stadholderate of Prince Maurice and patron of Grotius, calling him that 'good *Dutchman* and Patriot to whom his Country owed so much.'¹²

Oldenbarnevelt's administration had come into conflict with Prince Maurice over its policy of greater religious toleration. The issue became bound to questions of sovereignty in 1609 when one of Arminius' supporters, Johannes Uytenbogaert, argued that the various provincial authorities, rather than the synod of the Reformed Church, should control worship, preaching, the administration of sacraments, poor relief and the appointment of preachers. The following year ecclesiastical authority suffered a severe blow when, in response to the Remonstrants' petition, the States General resolved that Arminians should be allowed to practice their beliefs free from persecution. Matters came to a climax in 1616 when Oldenbarnevelt refused to accede to the demand of the Counter-Remonstrants that a synod be called in order to reassert the authority of the

Gordon had supposedly sold his services to the Whig administration. Vol. I of his *Tacitus* was dedicated to Walpole. See chapter 7 of this thesis for a fuller discussion of Gordon's use of Tacitus.

¹¹See chapter 3 for Trenchard and Gordon's Dutch connections and links with Hobbes and the de la Courts. Trenchard referred to the Dutch Republic, rather than Rome or Athens, as 'the most virtuous and flourishing state which ever yet appeared in the world ... a state which, ever since its institution, has been the champion of publick liberty', *CL*, II, no. 85, p. 618.

¹²Thomas Gordon, *The Works of Sallust Translated into English with Political Discourses upon that Author to which is added a Translation of Cicero's Four Orations Against Catiline* (London, 1754), p. 29.

Reformed Church. When Prince Maurice seconded the demand, raising the possibility that his control of the Provinces' armed forces might be used as leverage in the dispute, Oldenbarnevelt effected the passage of a resolution by the States of Holland which aimed at stripping the stadholder of his military power. With the battlelines drawn, Oldenbarnevelt's adversaries lined up against him behind Maurice in a confrontation which culminated in his trial and execution for treason. Grotius avoided a similar fate - for he stood in danger as a close associate of Oldenbarnevelt and as a result of the major role his polemics had played in the assault on ecclesiastical authority - although he was sentenced to life imprisonment, escaping two years later.¹³

For Gordon, Oldenbarnevelt was a heroic figure, sacrificed to the vaulting ambition of ecclesiastical authority and Prince Maurice's goal of achieving absolute rule over the Provinces. Parallels with the situation in Britain and the perceived threat posed by High Church Tories and Jacobites are obvious. It is these concerns which dominated the works of Trenchard and Gordon and which are also apparent in Mandeville's writings. Clearly it was not a 'neo-Harringtonian' ideal of liberty Gordon had in mind when he eulogised Oldenbarnevelt as 'the best Protestant, and best Commonwealth's Man upon Earth'.¹⁴

It was a shared concern with popery, in whatever guise, and Jacobitism which also inspired the attack on charity schools made by Gordon and Mandeville, triggered in

¹³See Richard Tuck, 'Grotius and Selden', *Cambridge History of Political Thought*, pp. 499-529, esp. pp. 500-1, 510-11.

¹⁴*The Works of Sallust*, p. 150.

this instance by the discovery of the Atterbury plot.¹⁵ Almost since their inception the schools had become the focus of party political strife and this intensified during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Dissenting involvement in the schools had gradually decreased as the standing of the High Church party rose under Anne's reign and with the passage of the 1711 Act against Occasional Conformity and the Schism Act of 1714. The schools were widely regarded as seedbeds of disaffection, an apparently not unfounded belief and one supported by reports carried by newspapers of the involvement of 'children with the badge of common charity on their backs' in the anti-Whig riots of 1715.¹⁶ During the rebellion the same year charity school boys, with the Pretender's favours in their caps and the cry of 'High Church and Ormand' on their lips, joined the crowds who thronged the streets. Even internal reports of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, an Anglican organisation which oversaw the charity school movement, expressed anxiety about the sympathies of some of the teachers and the trustees who had management of the institutions. Although many of the charges levelled at the teachers were merely part of the cut and thrust of party propaganda, there is a good deal of evidence that Jacobitism had made inroads into many of the London schools.¹⁷

Mandeville contended that it was in response to his 'Essay on Charity Schools' that the Grand Jury of Middlesex had decided in 1723 to present *The Fable of the Bees* to the Court of the King's Bench as a public nuisance, with the recommendation

¹⁵See CL, II, no. 133, pp. 919-21 and *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 284, 309, 310.

¹⁶*The Flying Post*, 26 April 1715, quoted in *The Charity School Movement*, pp. 112-13.

¹⁷See *The Charity School Movement*, pp. 113-14.

that its publisher be prosecuted.¹⁸ The only other publication singled out in the presentation, with a like recommendation, was *The British Journal*, specifically numbers 26, 35, 36 and 39, the last of which carried Cato's letter 'Of Charity Schools'.¹⁹ No. 26, 16 March 1722, called into question belief in the Trinity (one of the charges brought by the Grand Jury was that of Arianism) and nos. 35 and 36, 18 and 25 May, attacked the influence of the clergy.²⁰ However these essays were not merely an excoriating criticism of the clergy, they were also forcible expressions of support for the government. Both Trenchard and Gordon made clear that they were ready to be less rigorous in their commitment to traditional tenets of Whig faith when those very tenets became cant words in the mouths of High Church Tories, who covered treason with the gloss of patriotism, and when they allowed liberty to a few who would deprive the whole nation of its liberties:

To whom, as I have observed in a former paper, do we owe standing armies, such frequent suspensions of the *habeas corpus* bill, and so many consuming pensions? Even to those, who by their constant plots conspiracies, and rebellions, have given occasions, or pretences, for these great evils and excesses. And now that they have brought all these mischiefs and many more, upon us, and forced the government upon measures which perhaps would not have been thought of, certainly would not have been complied with, they would imprudently throw upon his Majesty the burdens of imputations, which they alone ought to be, or impiously dethrone him, and undo their country, for their own crimes.²¹

¹⁸*The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 409.

¹⁹ Numbered 120, 129, 130 and 133 in the Liberty Fund edition of *Cato's Letters*.

²⁰Trenchard and Gordon's main target was Frances Atterbury.

²¹*CL*, II, no. 129, p. 895. No. 129 was penned by Gordon but Trenchard had argued in similar vein in the previous letter: 'Look back, Gentlemen, once more, to later reigns: What testimony did they bear against the barefaced encouragement of popery, and the persecution of Protestants, in Charles II's reign; against his fatal treaties and leagues with France, his unjust wars with the United Provinces, and his treacherous seizure of their Smyrna fleet, to destroy the only state in the world that could be then called the bulwark of liberty and the Protestant religion? What did they say against the terrible excesses, the arbitrary imprisonments, the legal murders, and violation of property, during his reign? Did they not encourage and sanctify all the invasions and encroachments of the court, and cursed all who opposed them, or complained of them? Can they have the forehead to complain of armies, of taxes, or any sort of oppression (however just such complaint may be in others), they who have never shewn themselves for any government, but what subsisted by armies and oppression? They have been always mortal foes to popular liberty, which thwarts and frustrates all their aspiring and insatiable views', *CL*, II, no. 128, pp. 887-8.

Mandeville was notably less explicitly supportive of Walpole's administration in his 'Essay on Charity Schools', confining himself to a biting attack on High Church Tories. However, this may have been due to some personal distaste he felt for the first minister. Mandeville's friend and patron, Lord Macclesfield, had been the subject of an investigation for corruption, carried out at Walpole's instigation, which resulted in his removal from the Bench and the imposition of a £30,000 fine. George I promised to reimburse Macclesfield to the value of the fine and had repaid him £1,000 before he died. However after George's death Walpole, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, refused to make any further payments.²²

Nevertheless, Mandeville had been extremely fulsome in his support for the previous Whig administration, in *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness*, and he was almost certainly correct in asserting that his prosecution was politically motivated. Membership of the Grand Jury was largely determined along party lines. Its officers were nominated by two sheriffs, who themselves were elected by the City livery companies. The Jury which sat in judgement on Mandeville and 'Cato' had been chosen by two Tory sheriffs, Child and Parsons, and of the seven jurors whose political affiliations are known, five have been categorised as Tories and two as Country Whigs.²³ The Jury's decision

²²See Kaye's comments, *The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 327. As Gunn notes of the quarrel between Macclesfield and Walpole: 'This left Mandeville in the uncomfortable situation of a pro-administration Whig who may have felt no admiration for the most powerful Whig.', *Beyond Liberty and Property*, p. 105.

²³See W.A. Speck, 'Bernard Mandeville and the Middlesex Grand Jury', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 11 (1978), 362-74. Speck's argument that the Jurors proceeded against Trenchard in order to remove the stigma of Jacobitism from themselves and his portrayal of Trenchard as a Country Whig fails to make sense. The numbers of *Cato's Letters* which formed the subject of the prosecution condemned Jacobitism and expressed support for the administration. It is difficult to see how by condemning the authors of such opinions the Jury would have cleared itself from suspicion of Jacobitism. It would surely have produced the opposite effect.

to indict 'Cato' and Mandeville therefore appears to have been a partisan one. It was an attack on figures it regarded as united in their support of Walpole's administration. Moreover, there is arguably a possibility that the Jury may also have been reacting to Gordon's condemnation, in the journal *Pasquin*, of the conduct of the elections for the posts of sheriff at the end of June 1723. In the preceding weeks Gordon had railed against the candidature of Lockwood, who was then a member of the Grand Jury, accusing him of having raised large sums for the Pretender. Lockwood was nevertheless elected sheriff, although the results were contested and Gordon highlighted the alleged procedural irregularities in the July 5th issue of *Pasquin*, three days prior to the Jury handing down a judgement against the accused.

The last of five charges levelled at Mandeville and 'Cato' by the Grand Jury was that they sought to 'recommend Luxury, Avarice, Pride, and all kind of Vices, as being necessary to *Publick Welfare*'.²⁴ They were made the subjects of a similar accusation in a letter to 'Lord C', written under the signature of 'Theophilus Philo-Britannus', which appeared in the *London Journal* of 27th July 1723:

This profligate Author of the *Fable* is not only an Auxiliary to *Catiline* in Opposition to *Faith* but has taken upon him to tear up the very Foundations of *Moral Virtue*, and establish *Vice* in its Room.²⁵

As shown in chapter 3, Trenchard and Gordon were not consistently regarded by their contemporaries as critics of government and a number of them considered

²⁴*The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 385.

²⁵*Ibid.*, I, p. 397. As Kaye notes, the use of the epithet 'Catiline' by the author of the Letter to Lord C. was probably inspired by a pamphlet written against *Cato's Letters*, entitled *The Censor Censur'd: or, Cato Turn'd Catiline*. Mandeville responded to both Lord C's letter and the presentment of the Middlesex Grand Jury in his 'A Vindication of the Book'.

their sensationalist philosophy made them apologists for ministerial corruption as well as general libertinism. Obviously, Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* is built on the premise that luxury and other 'vices' are necessary to public welfare but, as the Middlesex Grand Jury recognised, *Cato's Letters* also puts forward a similar argument. Explicit references which Jurymen may have had in mind include Gordon's contention that '[a]mbition, avarice, revenge, are all so many virtues, when they aim at the general welfare'.²⁶

If a connection between 'Cato' and Mandeville was apparent to at least some of their contemporaries it has been missed by most modern commentators. J.A.W. Gunn notes that 'Cato' was described as Mandeville's 'humble Imitator and Follower' by a critic of both in a periodical of 1724 but argues this is 'a claim contrary both to fact and to logic. Thomas Gordon did certainly use Mandeville on later occasions but *Cato's Letters* upheld resolutely antithetical opinions'.²⁷ Gunn seems incorrect in his analysis on a number of grounds. Firstly, although it is true Gordon adopted a more flamboyantly 'Mandevillian' tone in his other writings, in *Cato's Letters* he also expressed views concerning religion and moral and political philosophy which appear strikingly akin to those of Mandeville.²⁸ Secondly, Gunn concedes that Gordon later 'used' Mandeville in *The Humourist* (1725), while maintaining that this shift occurred after Trenchard's death and 'Cato's' last

²⁶CL,I, no. 39, p. 276. The utilitarian definition of virtue given by both 'Cato' and Mandeville and the attempt to accommodate this with a rigorist definition of virtue is discussed in chapter 6.

²⁷*Beyond Liberty and Property*, p. 108. Goldsmith's views, which accord with those of Gunn in this matter, have already been cited.

²⁸ Even so, *Cato's Letters* are replete with statements, such as that quoted in the preceding paragraph, which are as provocative as anything written by Mandeville.

farewell. Here Gordon expressed his debt of gratitude to Mandeville, though the tone he adopted to do so was heavy with irony:

I am obliged to a Book, intitl'd, *The Fable of the Bees, or private Vices publick benefits*, for another good Argument in Defence of my Clients in this particular, which is contained in this following Paradox, viz). *That if every Body paid his Debts honestly, a great many honest Men would be ruined*: For, as it is learnedly argued in the aforesaid Book, that we are indebted to particular private Vices for the flourishing condition and Welfare of the Publick; and as, if Luxury ceased, great part of our Commerce would cease with it; and if the *Reformation of Manners* should so far prevail as to abolish Fornication, Multitudes of Surgeons would be ruined.²⁹

Yet these remarks were first made not in 1725 but at the same time as *Cato's Letters* were appearing. The second volume of *The Humourist* largely reproduces unsigned letters which appeared in *St. James's Journal* and *Pasquin*, pro-government publications set up, respectively, in May and November 1722 to counter attacks from the opposition press.³⁰ The lines Gunn refers to first appeared in *Pasquin* on 13th May 1723, some months before 'Cato' bid his readers adieu.

Gordon also employed another of Mandeville's arguments from *The Fable of the Bees*, an idiosyncratic one, in relation to luxury. He followed Mandeville in condemning the slaughter of multitudes of animals for human consumption, insisting: 'it is very unreasonable that the whole Creation should be lavished away in this profuse Manner'. They both argued man was capable of subsisting perfectly adequately without meat and that nature had intended him to be vegetarian. Gordon also echoed Mandeville's claim that as meat was not man's natural food

²⁹*The Humourist*, pp. 114-15.

³⁰P.B. Anderson draws attention to the fact that Gordon reused some of his material from *Pasquin* in *The Humourist*. See 'Cato's Obscure Counterpart in *The British Journal* 1722-25', *Studies in Philology*, 34 (1937), 412-28, at 425; see also *The Radical Whigs*, p. 170.

nothing but 'long Custom (that second Nature)' could have persuaded him to overcome his distaste for it and for the cruelty inflicted on animals in their slaughter. Surprisingly, there is no trace of irony in Mandeville's attack on meat-eating and he appears to have been quite sincere in his condemnation of 'this Barbarity of eating Flesh'. Gordon conveys the impression that he gave serious weight to the arguments in favour of vegetarianism but that ultimately he was more disgusted by man's gluttonous appetite than his carnivorous habits.³¹

Gunn also mentions William Arnall, a Walpolean publicist, who 'sometimes employed Harringtonian arguments in defence of Walpole' but who 'also found opportunities to argue in the manner of Mandeville.'³² Arnall's *Clodius and Cicero* (1727) is cited by Gunn as an example of the influence of Mandeville on Court writers. Yet according to an anonymous contemporary source, Walpole employed Gordon to edit and revise the pieces produced by Arnall and, particularly in *Clodius and Cicero*, it is the influence of Gordon rather than Mandeville that can be discerned.³³ In this pamphlet Arnall used the same defence of corruption as that employed by Gordon, that some evils are so deeply entrenched in society that to uproot them would be more dangerous than to suffer them to remain. Arnall also resurrected Gordon's example of Galbo and he is made to serve, as he does in *Cato's Letters*, as a witness to misplaced virtue.³⁴ Gordon's approving quotation

³¹See *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 173-81 and *The Humourist*, II, pp. 91-6. Obviously the same arguments could be found in classical sources, such as Epicurus and Porphyry. However, the idea that man was by nature non-carnivorous was sufficiently unusual in the eighteenth century for Mandeville's comments to be cited by vegetarian writers later in the century and through into the nineteenth century.

³²*Beyond Liberty and Property*, p. 109.

³³See *An Historical View of the Principles, Characters, Persons, etc. of the Political Writers of Great Britain*, pp. 16-17.

³⁴See chapter 7 of this thesis for Gordon's judgement on Galbo.

of Tacitus' judgement on the emperor was echoed in Arnall's assertion that 'Publick Frugality is an excellent virtue; yet that Virtue, excellent as 'tis, was the Bane of the Emperor *Galbo*, and involv'd the Empire in a terrible Series of Battles and massacre.'³⁵ Mandeville never employed Galbo as an exemplar in his work and he generally did not resort to allusions from classical history, that was Gordon's terrain. Internal evidence and contemporary testimony, therefore, suggest that Arnall was indebted to Gordon rather than to Mandeville for his arguments. However, in light of the similarity of the two writers' views it is not surprising that Gunn should have mistakenly identified Gordon's influence in *Clodius and Cicero* for that of Mandeville, although it does undermine Gunn's insistence that the authors of *Cato's Letters* and *The Fable of the Bees* held diametrically opposed opinions.

There is also evidence that Mandeville and Gordon may have both worked on *The British Journal* at the same time. After signing off for the last time in the *Journal*, 'Cato' returned for six issues in the guise of 'Criton'.³⁶ In addition to 'Criton' there were two other significant contributors to *The British Journal* in the period

³⁵See *Pasquin*, no. 56, 13 August 1723; *CL*, I, no. 41, p. 283; and William Arnall, *Clodius and Cicero* (London, 1727), pp. 8, 26, 28. Gordon may well have been influenced by Mandeville but it is also likely, as is argued in chapter 6, that similar influences shaped the work of both men. At his satiric best Gordon does read remarkably like Mandeville but he lacks his honesty, imagination and spark of originality. P.B. Anderson similarly mistook 'Criton', the pseudonym Gordon adopted in *The British Journal*, for Mandeville. See 'Cato's Obscure Counterpart', 412-28.

³⁶See 'Advertisement to the Reader', *CL*, II, p. 957. Gordon states in the Advertisement that it had been his intention, and that of Trenchard before his death, to publish occasional papers, principally on religious subjects but also to include several on political matters. In fulfilment of that aim Gordon wrote the six 'Criton' letters, later subjoined to *Cato's Letters* because he considered their political nature made them naturally part of that collection. The Advertisement also states that Gordon intends to publish the papers on religious matters as a third volume of *The Independent Whig*. As McMahon points out, this strongly suggests Gordon continued to contribute to *The British Journal* under the name of 'Criton' up until June 1724, evidence which McMahon says is usually overlooked by scholars. See *The Radical Whigs*, p. 97. However, quite apart from Gordon's

from mid 1723 to 1725, 'Diogenes' and 'Philanthropus'.³⁷ P.B. Anderson argues that all three were pseudonyms used by Mandeville.³⁸ There would seem a strong possibility this is true of some of the letters of 'Philanthropus'; those covering issue numbers 128-133 and 136-137 would appear to have to be assigned to Mandeville because they give in advance of publication the text of his *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Frequent Executions at Tyburn*.³⁹ However, in the case of 'Criton' the evidence is less convincing and seems rather to support the argument that Gordon continued with the pseudonym he adopted after laying 'Cato' to rest. Anderson sees the literary devices used by the pseudonymous writers as characteristic of Mandeville, yet most if not all of these were also employed by other authors of the period and certainly Gordon himself used amusing sketches of character and manners in *The Humourist* and occasionally made use of dialogues.

Anderson is nearer the mark when he argues that 'Cato's counterpart' found his inspiration and his models either in Mandeville or Bayle, Mandeville's favourite author.⁴⁰ Bayle was also a great favourite of Gordon and is cited on numerous occasions in both *Cato's Letters* and in some of his other works.⁴¹ Anderson also draws attention to the resemblance between 'Criton's' comment on Bayle's strange admiration for Louis XIV and the character of Antonia's remark to the same effect

testimony the subject matter of the 'Criton' letters lends credence to the argument that he was the author.

³⁷During the time 'Cato' was in residence at *The British Journal*, 'Diogenes' made an appearance on ten occasions, nine of these letters were subsequently claimed for 'Cato' by Gordon and published as part of complete editions of the *Letters*.

³⁸'Cato's Obscure Counterpart', 414.

³⁹G.S. Vichert, however, refutes Anderson's claim that 'Pilanthropus' was a pseudonym used by Mandeville. See Vichert's unpublished doctoral thesis, *A Critical Study of the English Works of Bernard Mandeville* (London, 1964), p. 327.

⁴⁰'Cato's Obscure Counterpart', 414.

in Mandeville's *The Virgin Unmask'd* (1714). Yet Gordon makes precisely the same observation in his *Tacitus*.⁴² As both men were great admirers of Bayle it is quite likely that each was struck by his lapse of judgement, although it is conceivable that Gordon had read *The Virgin Unmask'd* and repeated Mandeville's observation in *The British Journal* and *Tacitus*.

It is 'Criton's' attack on standing armies, however, which strongly indicates that his letters were penned not by Mandeville but by Gordon. Mandeville had no qualms about standing armies and in *The Fable of the Bees* made light of the idea of a citizen militia and argued, along division of labour lines, that a professional, salaried army was more efficient.⁴³ Gordon's position on standing armies, it will be remembered, was that as a matter of principle he was opposed to them but he was prepared to compromise on that when it conflicted with the larger principle of safeguarding liberty. By the end of 1723, when 'Criton' was writing, the Jacobite threat had receded and Gordon may have felt it timely to remind Walpole's administration that it held no mandate to maintain a standing army in the absence of any danger, unless perhaps the ministry regarded a people jealous of its liberties as its real foe.⁴⁴

Although, therefore, Anderson appears correct in identifying 'Philanthropus' as Mandeville, he would seem mistaken in assigning the 'Criton' letters to the same

⁴¹The question of the influence of the French moralistes and Bayle on both Mandeville and Gordon is discussed in chapter 6. For Gordon's references to Bayle in *Cato's Letters* see I, preface, p.28; no. 25, p. 183; no. 27, pp. 195-6; no. 44, pp. 298-9, 301-5; no. 52, p. 349.

⁴²See *Tacitus*, I, p. 23 and 'Cato's Obscure Counterpart', 417.

⁴³The image he conjures up is that of an eighteenth century version of the WWII British Homeguard, a 'Dad's Army' militia. See *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 119-120.

⁴⁴See *The British Journal*, 9 November 1723.

author. Given Gordon's statement in the Advertisement and the content of the letters, the strong likelihood is that he continued to contribute to *The British Journal* as 'Criton'. However, as previously observed, the error is one which is easily made, since the work of Mandeville and Gordon is so similar both in content and stylistically.

There is one further documented connection between Mandeville and Gordon. As already noted, Gordon was acquainted with, and drew on, *The Fable of the Bees* and it is possible he had read, and rated highly, another of Mandeville's work, *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness*. In a letter to 'Criton', in *The British Journal*, which may have been written by Gordon himself, or indeed by Mandeville, the book is praised lavishly.⁴⁵ 'Criton's' correspondent, 'AB', asks leave to enclose an extract from *Free Thoughts*, which he presents as a further salvo in the battle against persecution and bigotry instigated by 'Criton' in earlier numbers of the *Journal*. The warmth of the recommendation, and the slight hint of pique at the book's less than enthusiastic reception by the establishment, suggests Mandeville may have been the letter's author:

Give me, therefore, leave to present you with a very good Paper out of an excellent Book, too little known. It is Dr. *Mandeville's Free Thoughts on Religion, &c.* To the Reproach of our Taste, it has been twice translated into *French*, and yet is scarce known in *England*. It was written for the Interest of the establishment; and yet the Friends of the establishment have, for want of reading it, not promoted it. It is a masterly Book, abounding in fine Thoughts and Strong Matter, animated throughout with a honest, discerning, and beneficent Spirit, and diversified with curious and agreeable Quotations.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Apparently in the early eighteenth century it was a 'common modern practice' for a newspaper writer to pen letters to himself under a different pseudonym. See Frances Hutcheson, *On Human Nature*, ed. Thomas Mautner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Appendix 15, p. 163.

⁴⁶*The British Journal*, 30 May 1724.

The letter indicates Mandeville, or whoever it was who sheltered behind the signature 'AB', obviously believed the sentiments expressed in *Free Thoughts* were shared by Gordon's 'Criton'. As Mandeville's book attacks the clergy, supports toleration and the present administration and represents human nature as inherently selfish and self-serving, all views Gordon subscribed to, 'AB' was undoubtedly correct in his assumption. Equally, if it was Gordon who penned the glowing commendation of *Free Thoughts*, it represents an open acknowledgement on his part of how much he and Mandeville were at one in terms of their analysis of man and society and in their over-arching concerns.

Nor indeed was Trenchard's thought so very different to that of Mandeville and, although he lacked the satirist's wit, in terms of religious, moral and political philosophy he was at one with Gordon and Mandeville.⁴⁷ If, therefore, modern critics can confuse the work or influence of Mandeville and Gordon in this way it does call into question the civic humanist paradigm itself, which pits Mandeville on the side of the 'moderns', as champion of the new economic age, against 'Cato', on the side of the 'ancients' and as defender of classical virtue.⁴⁸

However, Trenchard and Gordon's concept of virtue, like that of Mandeville, was not tied to the civic humanist model of an arms-bearing citizen freeholder. They defined virtue in precisely the same utilitarian terms as Mandeville:

Morality, or moral virtues, are certain rules of mutual convenience or indulgence, conducive or necessary to the well-being of society. Most of

⁴⁷See, for example, *CL*, II, nos. 109, 110, 11, 15, 116, 122 and 124.

⁴⁸Pocock, Kramnick, Goldsmith and Gunn all subscribe to this interpretation. It has to be restated that these confusions relate to a period prior to what is seen in the civic humanist analysis as Gordon's fall from grace. See, for example, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, p. 23.

these are obvious; for every man knows what he desires himself; which is, to be free from oppression, and the insults of others, and to enjoy the fruits of his own acquisitions, arising from his labour or invention. And since he can have no reason to expect this indulgence to himself, unless he allow it to others, who have equal reason to expect it from him, it is the common interest of all, who unite together in the same society, to establish such rules and maxims for their mutual preservation; that no man can oppress or injure another, without suffering by it himself. As far as these rules are discoverable by the light of reason, or that portion of understanding which most, or all men have, they are called morality ... I have often read, with pleasure, pretty speculative discourses upon the intrinsick excellence of virtue, and of its having a real existence independent of human considerations, or worldly relations: But when I have been able to forget, or lay aside the dalliances and amusements of fancy, and the beautiful turns of expression, I could consider it philosophically, only as an empty sound, when detached and separated from natural, national, or religious politicks ...⁴⁹

Similarly, like Mandeville, Trenchard and Gordon did not share the neo-Harringtonian veneration of England's Gothic past and viewed life then as a brutish and mean existence. In direct contrast to neo-Harringtonian doctrine, Trenchard and Gordon perceived liberty to be the product of a consumer society rather than an agrarian one. As Adam Smith was later to argue, Trenchard contended that man possessed more liberty in a consumer society because it allowed him to sell the products of his labour within the marketplace rather than selling his person to a feudal overlord. Moreover, in typically Mandevillian manner, he reasoned that the luxury of the rich produced social benefits, providing work and therefore a living for the poor:

Now in countries where no other arts are in use, but only husbandry and the professions necessary to it, and to support those who are employed about it; all the other inhabitants have no means of purchasing food and raiment, but by selling their persons, and becoming vile slaves and vassals to their princes, lords, or other proprietors of the land; and are obliged, for necessary sustenance, to follow them in their wild wars, and their personal and factious quarrels, and to become the base instruments of their ambition

⁴⁹CL, II, no. 108, pp. 761-2. The letter is written by Trenchard. For Mandeville's view see *The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 244.

and pride ... This is the forlorn condition of mankind, in most of the wild empires of the East; this was their condition in all the Gothick governments; and this is the condition of Poland and of the highlands of Scotland; where a few have liberty, and all the rest are slaves. And nothing can free mankind from this abject and forlorn condition, but the invention of arts and sciences; that is, the finding out of more materials and expedients to make life easy and pleasant; and the inducing people to believe, what they will readily believe, that other things are necessary to their happiness, besides those which nature has made necessary. Thus the luxury of the rich becomes the bread of the poor.⁵⁰

Mandeville, like Trenchard and Gordon, built on the sensationalist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke in order to present commercial society as natural to man, a product of his ceaseless desires. Adopting an anti-Cartesian view of man, all three authors conceived of him as a machine like any other animal, merely one more intricately made.⁵¹ Man is presented as a flesh and blood machine which endlessly responds to and seeks out new forms of stimulation. So that when the most basic of his desires have been met, those of food and shelter, he seeks new forms of stimulus. Once he is in no danger of starving or suffering from exposure to the elements, his desires turn to more palatable food and more commodious habitation and in order to satisfy those desires men are driven to industry and to trade.⁵² Mandeville, however, was considerably more sophisticated in his analysis than 'Cato' and described how in the process of civilisation man's psychological needs and desires take on as great a force as those which are physical. Man's self-liking, his natural sense of superiority distinct from his instinct of self-love, becomes more

⁵⁰Ibid., I, no. 67, pp. 472-3. The author of this letter is Trenchard. For Mandeville's anti-nostalgic analysis of the wide-spread material benefits of modernity compared to the drudgery endured by the majority of men in the past, see *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 169-172. For comparison with Adam Smith see, for example, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 3 vols. (London, 1791), II, pp. 82, 88; III, 42-3, 183-192.

⁵¹See CL, II, no. 104, pp. 735-6, and nos. 116 and 122; *The Fable of the Bees*, II, pp. 174, 139-40.

⁵²See CL, I, no. 40, p. 278.

highly developed and the need to be admired and to feel validated in his judgement of himself becomes his motivating force.⁵³

Yet both Mandeville and 'Cato' were at one in seeking to understand man 'scientifically' and, like Hobbes, saw him as essentially selfish. He was a creature governed by his 'darling passion' of pride, which was insatiable in the tribute it demanded:

The world is governed by men, and men by their passions; which being boundless and insatiable, are always terrible when they are not controuled. Who was ever satiated with riches, or surfeited with powers, or tired with honours?⁵⁴

Hence, Mandeville and 'Cato', following similar lines of thought to the de la Courts, believed a 'republican' form of government, incorporating a series of checks and balances, was best framed to restrain man and thereby render society stable and secure. Far from being a champion of true civic virtue, as proponents of the neo-Harringtonian thesis would have it, 'Cato', like Mandeville, considered this attribute not only contrary to what was known of human nature but unnecessary:

[T]he making of laws supposes all men naturally wicked; and the surest mark of virtue is, the observation of laws that are virtuous: If therefore we would look for virtue in a nation, we must look for it in the nature of government.⁵⁵

⁵³See *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp 346-7; II, pp. 129-137.

⁵⁴*CL*, I, no. 33, p.238.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, I, no. 31, p. 222. Also see II, no. 108, p. 762. As argued in chapter 3 of this thesis, in this Trenchard and Gordon were more Harringtonian than neo-Harringtonian.

Virtue was considered by Trenchard and Gordon, as it was by Mandeville, in strictly functional terms and they viewed it as an artificial construct rather than as a fixed and intrinsic quality of man:

We do not expect philosophical virtue from them; but only that they follow virtue as their interest, and find it penal and dangerous to depart from it. And this is the only virtue that the world wants, and the only virtue, that it can trust to.⁵⁶

All three men were also slightly equivocal about how men's passions might be made to serve the public interest. Mandeville, in 'An Enquiry Into the Origin of Moral Virtue, suggested that moral codes were devised originally by those in power, in order to safeguard their positions and to deceive the people into meekly accepting their lot.⁵⁷ Similarly, Gordon insisted that those who urge men to mortify their appetites often meant nothing but '*Make your passions tame, that I may ride them.*'⁵⁸ Yet at the end of 'A Search Into the Nature of Society', Mandeville explained the paradox contained in the title of his book, 'that Private Vices by the dextrous Management of a skilful Politician may be turned into Publick Benefits.'⁵⁹ In like fashion, Trenchard argued:

[Man's] passions, which direct and govern all the motions of his mind, seems to me to be purely mechanical ... and whoever would govern him, and lead him, must apply to those passions; that is, pull the proper ropes, and turn the wheels which will put the machine in motion.⁶⁰

The suggestion in both the case of Trenchard and Gordon and in that of Mandeville seems to be that it was in the interest of the nation for governors not to attempt to keep the people timidly virtuous but to allow their passions a wide scope, such as

⁵⁶CL, I, no. 40, p. 282. See also CL, I, no. 33 and *The Fable of the Bees*, II, pp. 323, 335.

⁵⁷*The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 41-57.

⁵⁸CL, I, no. 39, p. 276.

⁵⁹*The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 369.

was offered by modern, as opposed to ancient, society. Laws and constitutional mechanisms were there to restrain men, and their governors, when those passions threatened to become detrimental to the nation.

It would seem very much the case, therefore, that contrary to general opinion Mandeville and 'Cato' do not constitute polar opposites within a civic humanist paradigm. In terms of their religious, moral and political philosophy there are, as has been shown, major convergences. Mandeville, who detested hypocrisy and whose political heritage differed from that of his adopted land, eschewed the 'Roman language' which Trenchard and Gordon sometimes employed in order to criticise the abuses of power, yet this should not obscure the fact that their underlying beliefs and concerns were remarkably similar. All three men endorsed the new commercial age, and the financial structures which underpinned it, because it promised increased material and religious liberty for the individual. Equally, none of them felt overly enamoured of the man who was leading the nation into this new age. In the case of Trenchard and Gordon their support for Walpole depended on their perception of the degree of danger posed by High Church Tories and Jacobites to the nation's liberty. The same to some extent was true of Mandeville but his personal feelings towards Walpole, coloured by the first minister's treatment of his friend Macclesfield, may explain why his support for the ministry was less enthusiastic. If Trenchard, Gordon and Mandeville have to be categorised, it is perhaps more correct therefore to consider them not as adversaries, representatives of opposing Court and Country ideologies, but as 'independent Whigs', however limited that description might be.

⁶⁰CL, II, no. 105, p. 742.

Chapter VI

The Influence of the French Moralists in the work of 'Cato' and Mandeville

In the previous chapter it has been argued that Mandeville and 'Cato' can not be viewed as representative of the polar oppositions which constitute the civic humanist paradigm. Instead it has been suggested that rather than being diametrically and fundamentally opposed to one another, the authors of the *Cato's Letters* and Mandeville shared a similar perspective in terms of their moral, political and religious philosophy. Indeed it is possible to trace a number of common, and mutually reinforcing, influences which appear to have shaped the distinctive viewpoint expressed by all three writers.

A number of commentators have noted that Mandeville's work owed much to Bayle, La Rochefoucauld and the French Catholic moraliste tradition.¹ However what has not previously been observed is that Gordon's work reveals a similar debt. Obviously the view of man put forward in this French tradition, of human nature defined in terms of its psychological egoism, is one with which both Trenchard and Gordon would have been familiar from their knowledge of Hobbes' work. However, what appeared to interest both men, and Gordon in particular, was the way in which the moralistes and their successors elaborated on Hobbes' naturalistic study of man in order to offer a sophisticated analysis of the operation of self-love and, specifically, its ability to produce socially beneficial results.

The Jansenist conception of man as a creature motivated entirely by self-love complemented that presented by Hobbes and others in the modern natural law tradition. It was dominated by an awareness of the weakness of reason, of the strength of the passions and of the power of pride and vanity. However, at the same time as it insisted on the unregenerate nature of man, of his inability to act except on the basis of self-love, Jansenist doctrine upheld a rigorous morality, in the knowledge that it could never be achieved without divine aid. Salvation, it was argued, could only be obtained as a gift from God and could not be won, as the Jesuits held, in part through man's own efforts.² The combination of such pessimism about human nature and such an unyielding morality produced in the work of the Port Royalists an excoriating psychological examination of man. The aim was to tear from men the public disguises they wore in order to deceive others and, more insidiously, to deceive themselves into a belief in their virtue. The theme of unmasking or dissecting the layers of man's deception, which also figures largely in Mandeville's work, was therefore prominent in Jansenist texts: 'We are nothing but lies, duplicity, contradiction, and we hide and disguise ourselves from ourselves.'³

At the same time, in the last half of the seventeenth century a strong current developed in Jansenist thought which saw the many manifestations of self-love, in all its subtle and ingratiating forms, as a necessary component of social cohesion.

¹See especially F.B. Kaye's Introduction to *The Fable of the Bees*; and T.A. Horne, *The Social and Political Thought of Bernard Mandeville* (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), pp. 20-25.

²The doctrinal difference at issue was that of efficacious grace as opposed to sufficient grace.

³Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (London: Penguin, 1966), fragment 655.

In the absence of natural sociability self-love was seen to bind men together in civil society. In order to garner the admiration and validation necessary for self-love to thrive it compelled men to rein in, and cloak in different guise, this ruling passion which would otherwise render them intolerable to one another: 'Social life would not last long if men were not taken in by each other.'⁴ Self-love remained reprehensible but in its operation it might be seen as evidence of God's mercy, so that even man's fallen nature could be turned to good effect.⁵ It could therefore be considered under two aspects, the rigoristic and the utilitarian, and judged according to these criteria. In strict moral terms self-love was always to be condemned; however, in some instances, where it conduced to an improvement in the general welfare of mankind, the effects, if not the motive, might be approved.

This concept of duality was perhaps most clearly, and enthusiastically, expressed by Nicole. In conventional Jansenist fashion he called men to recognise their sinful nature and, in *De la crainte de Dieu*, likened human existence to a nightmarish masque, where a facade of sociability and comeliness hid from public view the rank depravity which lurked beneath. Yet he also described how man's ambition to satisfy his own desires propelled him to satisfy the desires of others. Men gratified their psychological needs in a quid pro quo which involved the exchange of civilities and favours, a system of mutual flattery, and similarly in gratifying their

⁴La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims* (London: Penguin, 1959), no. 87.

⁵Jean Domat, a close friend of Pascal and a fellow Jansenist, described how God ameliorated the worst effects of self-love: 'From this very principle of division He has made a tie that binds men together in a thousand ways and supports the greater part of our engagements.', *Traité des loix*, quoted in N.O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the state in France, the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 305. For a general discussion of Jansenism see also pp. 283-311.

material needs they served the material needs of others, through the process of commerce. So it was that avarice brought benefits and an improvement in human happiness which exceeded by far anything that might be effected through the exercise of mere charity:

Men being void of Charity, by the disorder of Sin, nevertheless remain full of wants, and in an infinite number of ways depend one upon another. Concupiscence therefore hath taken the place of Charity that it may supply these wants; and the means it uses are such that one cannot enough admire them; vulgar Charity cannot reach so far. Going in the Country we meet almost every where People that are ready to serve those that pass on the Road, and who have Houses furnisht to entertain them. These are at the Traveller's dispose, he commands, they obey. They seem to believe that we do them a tenderness in accepting their service, they never seek to be excis'd from lending that assistance which is requir'd. What would deserve our wonder more than these People, were they animated and set on work by Charity? But it is Concupiscence that does it, and does it so well and gracefully, that they would even have us to think that they take it for a courtesie that we employ them in our service.

What a piece of Charity would it be to build for another an intire House, furnish it with all necessary Houshold-stuff; and after that to deliver him up the Key? Concupiscence does this cheerfully. What Charity would it be to go and fetch Drugs from the *Indies*, to Submit ones self to the meanest offices, and serve others in the most abject and painful commands? And this Concupiscence does without ever complaining.⁶

Since judged by outcome the results produced by charity were no different to those of 'enlightened' self-love, which identified its own interests with those of others, Nicole proposed that instead of attempting the hopeless task of persuading men to practice charity, they should be encouraged to recognise how each man's interest was tied to that of his fellow. However, he was conscious that enlightened self-love would not suffice alone, man's fallen nature necessarily prescribed the limits

⁶Pierre Nicole, 'Of Grandeur', *Moral Essays*, 2 vols. (London, 1677), II, p. 167. Nicole made explicit what was implicit in Pascal, who chose to combine brevity with biting irony: 'Man's

of his capacity for enlightenment, and that therefore it required to be circumscribed by strict laws and firm government. Like Hobbes, he believed that government had to be absolute and unlimited in order to exert the control necessary to restrain man's selfish passions. Equally he realised that a sovereign power could not depend on the use of sheer brute force as a means of coercion, it was too blunt and ineffective an instrument, and instead he argued that naked power was best decked out in pomp and finery in order to dazzle and inspire men with awe, thereby rendering them willingly submissive. Pride led the powerful to regale themselves in splendour, and was therefore reprehensible, but it also served a useful purpose, by eliciting a deference from inferiors which maintained the social order. Writing of the external marks of respect given by inferiors to the great, Nicole argued:

[T]hough these perhaps in their origine be but the inventions of Man's pride, which perchance enjoys its Greatness better by seeing the abjection of others; yet ought we to acknowledge that these respects and deferences are in themselves both useful and just; and that though Pride had not, yet Reason ought to have brought them in fashion.⁷

Nicole's thought in many respects followed or elucidated that of Pascal, although the fascinated enthusiasm revealed in the former's account of the economic prosperity generated by self-love is not to be found in his fellow Port Royalist. In Pascal, approval of the social benefits produced by the indulgence of men's passions is never allowed to dull his penetrating exposure of human corruption. This qualified approval extended to the greatest benefit afforded to men, that of civil stability and peace. He regarded the constitution of society as merely the

greatness even in his concupiscence. He has managed to produce such a remarkable system from it and make it the image of true charity.', *Pensées*, fragment 118.

⁷'Of Grandeur', *Moral Essays*, II, p. 158.

result of a Hobbesian struggle for power and viewed its codes as signifying nothing more than the will of the strong. Whilst these codes should still be respected, not only because the strong had the power to punish but also because there was so much disagreement between men as to what was right, Pascal reminded men that a distinction remained between human justice and God's justice. However, the common people, he argued, needed the illusion that laws were just because they would not otherwise submit themselves to a fabricated justice, lacking as they did the ability to comprehend that as man was incapable of true justice if he wished for peace and security he had to make do with what his masters called justice.⁸

It is certain that Gordon knew and admired Pascal's work and, in view of the persistent moraliste themes which occur in *Cato's Letters*, it is not unlikely that this was true of Trenchard also. Gordon recommended to his readers 'the Reflections of the excellent Monsieur Pascal', as one of the 'most useful and entertaining Books' produced in the later ages and elsewhere had one of his fictional interlocutors second this praise by declaring 'Monsieur *Pascal*, a learned, Candid, and acute Writer, as any of his Age'.⁹ The extent of Gordon's familiarity with the work of other Jansenist writers is not so easily established. Certainly Nicole's *Moral Essays* were available in translation in England and were widely read and the warmth of Gordon's admiration suggests more than a superficial or narrow acquaintance with the Port Royalists:

⁸See *Pensées*, fragments 103, 520, 525, 645, 828.

⁹*The Humourist*, p. 130, also printed in *St. James Journal*, 4 May 1723; Thomas Gordon, 'A Dialogue between a Noble Convert and his late Confessor', *Essays Against Popery, Slavery, and*

The Gentlemen of Port Royal were, for their Learning and Writings, for their Religion and Virtue, an ornament to the learned world as well as to the Kingdom of France.¹⁰

Cato's Letters also refer to La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and Fontenelle, who although not Jansenists shared the Jansenist view of human nature and the role played by self-love. La Rochefoucauld has in recent years undergone a re-evaluation; once seen as a sceptic and *libertin*, it is now argued he should be understood within the context of Jansenism.¹¹ It is within that framework that Gordon seems to have considered the author of the *Maxims*. On the two occasions that he quotes La Rochefoucauld directly it is in relation to religious toleration. Like many other Protestants, Gordon regarded Jansenism as the acceptable face of Roman Catholicism and viewed the Port Royalists as victims of Jesuit persecution, the latter being seen not only as bigots but meddlers in state affairs, the two cardinal sins in Gordon's eyes. The Jansenists had come under attack from the Jesuits over their insistence on the efficacious nature of grace and Pascal had launched a scathing counterattack in his *Les Provinciales*. Gordon defended the Port Royalists, arguing:

[A]ll this merit [that of the Port Royalists] saved them not from contumely and persecution, because they had defended the eternal laws of Morality and the Gospel against the execrable maxims of casuistry of the Jesuits, who in their voluminous writings had confounded all Morality and Conscience. For this the Gentlemen of Port Royal were represented as Atheists, Heretics, and enemies of the Church, nay as enemies to the

Arbitrary Power Published during the late unnatural Rebellion in the Years 1745 and 1746 (London, 1750), p. 195.

¹⁰*The Works of Tacitus*, II, p. 137. The first English translation of Nicole's *Moral Essays* was printed in 1677. Bearing in mind the similarities between the Jansenist and natural law tradition, it is perhaps not surprising that Locke was sufficiently impressed by Nicole to produce a translation of three of the *Essays* for the Countess of Shaftesbury, later published in 1828. See *Philosophy and the state in France*, p. 294.

¹¹See *ibid.*, p. 289.

Government, and thence exposed to all injustice, ill usage and the frowns of power.¹²

Gordon's use of La Rochefoucauld illustrates how deeply he was influenced by Jansenist thinking. The *Maxims*, in conventional Jansenist manner, condemn self-love but they also adopt a second, utilitarian criterion in judging man's abiding passion. Under this second heading self-love might be considered neutral, neither good nor evil but judged to warrant the name of virtue under some circumstances and vice under others.¹³ The standard for judging conduct virtuous or vicious for La Rochefoucauld was whether it facilitated sociability, whether it made men more or less agreeable to one another.¹⁴ So it was that men counted a quality, such as moderation, virtuous which should properly be termed a vice, being a manifestation of self-love in the form of love of ease and the absence of disturbance: 'Moderation has been declared a virtue so as to curb the ambition of the great and console lesser folk for their lack of fortune and merit.'¹⁵

Gordon can be seen to have employed similar Jansenist distinctions. Although, drawing on Hobbesian and Lockean sensationalism, he naturalised self-love or

¹²*The Works of Tacitus*, II, pp. 137-8. A common view, then as now, was to see Jansenism as a Catholic version of Calvinism. Hume's opinion seems typical of that of British Protestants: '[T]he *jesuits*, are great friends to superstition, rigid observers of external forms and ceremonies, and devoted to the authority of the priests, and to tradition. The *jansenists* are enthusiasts, and zealous promoters of the passionate devotion, and of the inward life; little influenced by authority; and in a word, but half catholics. The consequences are exactly conformable to the foregoing reasoning. The *jesuits* are the tyrants of the people, and the slaves of the court: And the *jansenists* preserve alive the small sparks of the love of liberty, which are to be found in the FRENCH nation.', David Hume, 'Of Moral Prejudices', *Political Writings*, ed. S.D. Warner and D.W. Livingston (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), p. 189.

¹³*Maxims*, nos. 253 and 305. However in strict moral terms self-love always remained evil: 'To punish man for original sin, God has let him turn his self-love into a god to torment him in every act of his life.', no. 509.

¹⁴See *Maxims*, nos. 273 and 156. La Rochefoucauld, whose life was that of the Court, was less concerned than Nicole with moralising economic activity. The virtues he discussed were those

self-interest, he also adopted the role of moralist and sought to unmask man in order to bring him to a better understanding of himself and to effect a reformation: to rid men of their bigotry and intolerance.¹⁶ He argued *amour propre* was the root of all passions and that 'all the different passions are only several names for the operations of self-love.'¹⁷ All activity labelled virtuous, the authors of *Cato's Letters* held, was in effect motivated by self-love, however much men sought to deceive themselves and others to the country:

A good humoured man, when he pities another, gratifies a natural passion, in having a fellow-feeling of the calamities of others, and a desire to see all men out of pain or trouble. A generous man pleases his vanity, ostentation, or temper, in doing good to others; or by it intends to gain friends or dependants. An indulgent parent takes pleasure to see that his children (whom he esteems parts of himself) live happy, contented, and make a figure in the world; and derives credit and reputation to himself from their doing so. A beneficent patron, or a man in love, reaps great personal satisfaction in obliging the objects of his kindness, and by making them more devoted to himself.¹⁸

Gordon's description of self-love was taken straight from La Rochefoucauld but could equally have been supplied by Pascal:

Of all the passions which belong to human nature, self-love is the strongest, and the root of all the rest; or, rather, all the different passions are only several names for the several operations of self-love. Self-love, says the Duke of Rochefoucauld, is the love of one's self, and of every thing else for one's own sake: It makes a man the idolater of himself, and the tyrant of

appropriate to an *honnête homme*, such as valour, moderation and civility and friendship and generosity. See nos. 1, 16, 21, 81, 83, 144, 264.

¹⁵*Maxims*, no. 308.

¹⁶It will be remembered that, in *The Independent Whig*, Trenchard and Gordon had stated that their project was to bring about a reformation by attacking 'priestcraft and tyranny'. See chapter 3 of this thesis. They, like Mandeville, were not in favour of conventional movements to reform manners.

¹⁷*CL*, I, no. 31, p. 222. This, of course, also echoed the image of human nature presented by the de la Courts. Pieter de la Court argued: 'Every man finds in himself, and observes in others, the Passion of Self-love prevails so far over our Reason', *Fables, Moral and Political*, II, p. 42. So too, the idea of self-deception and the practice of 'masking', which is a constant theme of Jansenist literature and appears in the work of Trenchard and Gordon, as well as in Mandeville's work, also occupied the de la Courts.

¹⁸*CL*, II, no. 117, p. 815.

others. He observes that man is a mixture of contrarieties; imperious and supple, sincere and false, fearful and bold, merciful and cruel: He can sacrifice every pleasure to the getting of riches, and all his riches to a pleasure: He is fond of his preservation, and yet sometimes eager after his own destruction: He can flatter those whom he hates, destroy those whom he loves.

This is a picture of mankind: and they who say it is a false one, ought to shew that they deserve a better.¹⁹

Gordon was here exposing religious intolerance as the operation of self-love, the desire to have others believe and practice as oneself, and continued:

Whatever men think or do, especially if they have found a good name for it, be it ever so foolish or bad, is wisest and best in their own eyes: But this is not all; we will needs be plaguing our neighbours, if they do not quit upon our authority their own thoughts and practices for ours ... Everything is so perverted and abused, and the best things most, that a very wise man [La Rochefoucauld] had but too much reason to say, that truth did so much good in the world, as the appearance and pretence of it did evil. Thus the saving of men's souls is so universally understood to be a great and glorious blessing, that for the sake of it men have suffered, and do suffer, the highest misery and bondage from the imposters who pretend to bestow it, in the dark parts of the world which are by far the greatest parts of the world.²⁰

In unmasking man Gordon made the Jansenist distinction between actions titled virtuous by society, in consequence of the benefits to the general welfare they produced, and the inner motive of the agent of the action. Following La Rochefoucauld, he also made play of the chance nature of whether a man was

¹⁹CL, I, no. 31, p. 222.

²⁰Ibid., no. 31, pp. 223-4. The maxim referred to by Gordon is: 'Truth does not do so much good in the world as the semblance of truth does evil', *Maxims*, no. 4. It does not explicitly mention toleration, as that would perhaps be an inappropriate subject for an *honnête homme*, although that meaning could be implicit given that the age in which La Rochefoucauld lived was one beset by religious wars. However Gordon may have been thinking of Bayle's comments on toleration: '[T]o comprehend how a Man may be very Zealous and very Vicious at the same time, we need only consider, the love of Religion in the greatest Part, is no way different from their other Passions for common Objects.', Pierre Bayle, *Miscellaneous Reflections on the Comet*, 2 vols. (London, 1708), II, p. 317.

considered virtuous or vicious, depending on the outcome of his actions. Man was so much a slave of his passions that he was incapable of choosing virtue freely and if society called him good it was merely because his passions chanced to serve the good of society:

For men to act independently of their passions, is a contradiction; since their passions enter into all that they do, and are the source of it: and the best actions which men perform, often arise from fear, vanity, shame, and the like causes. When the passions of men do good to others, it is called virtue and public spirit; and when they do hurt to others it is called selfishness, dishonesty, lust, and other names of infamy. The motive of every man's conduct is fetched from within, and has a good or an ill name according to its effects upon others; and sometimes the great difference between an honest man and a knave, is no other than a piece of humour, or a piece of chance.²¹

In *The Humourist*, in typical Jansenist mode, Gordon 'unmasked' man's self-love and revealed him as a creature whose second nature was that of a dissembler and who not only deceived others but succeeded in deceiving himself:

Mankind is ever mask'd without knowing it. We learn to disguise ourselves in Childhood. Good Breeding is nothing but putting on the Vizard well, and good Manners is only wearing it handsomely. We seldom lay it aside, even when we are alone, as though we were afraid of seeing ourselves naked. We never speak what we think; and there are some Thoughts we [hide] from with a studied Dexterity.²²

²¹*CL*, I, no. 40, pp. 279-280. See also *Maxims*, nos. 1, 57, 58, 380, 631. Gordon also repeated in the same letter, without attribution, one of La Rochefoucauld's most persistent criticisms, that virtue was often the result of laziness: 'Disinterestedness is often created by laziness, pride, or fear; and then it is no virtue', p. 279. A similar point is made in *The Humourist*, this time citing La Rochefoucauld. See also *Maxims* nos. 16, 169, 398, 512.

²²*The Humourist*, p. 201. The title of *The Humourist* suggests a light-hearted piece of entertainment, an impression belied by the biting satire on human nature contained in this collection of essays. Because the net of Gordon's satire was cast so wide at first sight it is not always clear who his main target was. He defends Walpole's ministry, the 'great men' charged with the nation's welfare, from the criticism of opposition journalists and the 'rabble', whom he abuses mercilessly. Yet at the same time the compliments he pays those same great men are heavy with irony. It should perhaps be noted that some of the essays in *The Humourist* also appeared in *St. James's Journal*, a pro-ministry paper set up at a time when Walpole's administration was coming under intense attack from the opposition press. In response to this offensive, Gordon seems to have been prepared to lend his support to Walpole against the Tories and, in his view, the misguided Old Whigs who he believed were in danger of opening a breach in the nation's defences which would allow in the Pretender.

Even as he criticised man's self-love, however, Gordon acknowledged its social utility. By adopting masks men made themselves bearable to one another and in the absence of virtue and natural sociability self-love bound society together:

Were we not to endeavour to throw a Veil over our more secret and retired Actions, we should appear more ridiculous and mischievous than Apes and Monkeys and be intolerable even to one another, for we can almost at first View discern the least Spot or Blemish in another, tho' it is with exceeding Difficulty we are brought to discover one in ourselves, for this Reason Hypocrisy has such a share among the Ingredients of which we are composed; it is given to supply the Place of Virtue.²³

It is possible, therefore, that like Mandeville and Jansenist writers Gordon maintained a dual morality, one which was rigoristic, concerned primarily with motive, and the other utilitarian, concerned to a greater extent with consequence.²⁴

However at the same time, Gordon was not ready to let Walpole off the hook entirely. It seems a case of my enemy's enemy is my friend; Gordon was vehemently anti-Jacobite so almost inevitably he sometimes found himself on the same side as Walpole. See *The Humourist*, p. 207.

²³See *ibid.*, p. 155.

²⁴It needs to be reiterated that 'utilitarian' is used here, as elsewhere in this thesis, in the broad sense and not to denote an ethical theory. Individual utilitarians, in the strict sense of the word would, of course, place varying degrees of emphasis on the motive element of an action. Whilst it might appear unnecessarily confusing to ascribe the term utilitarian to Trenchard and Gordon's thought, it would perhaps generate greater confusion to describe them as Epicureans. One of the problems of attaching this label to Trenchard and Gordon, or indeed to Mandeville, is that Epicureanism, as they would have understood it via Gassendi and other sympathetic commentators, would have seemed a too severe and idealistic creed. From Gassendi, or from translations of his work, they would have learnt: '*Epicurus ... makes Happiness to consist in the Ease of the Body, and the Tranquility of the Mind, teaching at the same time, and maintaining, That the efficient Causes of this Felicity, are neither the delicious Wines, nor the delicate Meats, nor any such thing; but a sound, just and enlightened Reason assisted by Vertue, from which it is not to be separated, and which duly weighs and examines the Causes and Motives that induce us, either to embrace or shun any thing.*' Epicurus taught that men should distinguish between lusts or desires that are natural and necessary and those that are vain and superfluous 'for the Happiness of Life depends upon the denial of the latter, and our being content with the enjoyment of the former.', *Three Discourses of Happiness, Virtue, and Liberty. Collected from the Works of the Learn'd Gassendi*, pp. 13, 39. They would not have subscribed to the idea of a hierarchy of pleasures. True happiness, as defined by Epicurus, would have seemed to them beyond the attainment of ordinary men. Mandeville was emphatic on this point: 'That the highest Good consisted in Pleasure, was the Doctrine of *Epicurus*, who yet led a Life exemplary for Continence, Sobriety, and other Virtues, which made People of the succeeding Ages quarrel about the Signification of Pleasure. Those who argued from the Temperance of the Philosopher, said, That the Delight *Epicurus* meant, was being virtuous; so *Erasmus* in his *Colloquies* tells us, That there are no greater *Epicures* than pious Christians. Others that reflected

Yet at the same time, his adoption of Jansenist sentiments and motifs might equally be seen as a misanthropic device rather than as an expression of sincere belief. Indeed this is a charge which has sometimes been directed at Mandeville, that his insistence on applying rigorist criteria in tandem with the utilitarian when judging men's actions was not only logically untenable but insincere. F.B. Kaye argues that Mandeville's juxtaposition of, in Kaye's opinion, these contrary standards resulted in a *reductio ad absurdum* of rigorism.²⁵ However, M.J. Scott-Taggart has disputed Kaye's conclusion and contends, correctly it would seem, that it is perfectly consistent to hold to both standards, as 'loosely' defined by Kaye. Scott-Taggart argues that:

[T]here is nothing paradoxical about this mixing as such. We might analogously be interested both in the dexterity and effectiveness of an action, and discover that, although connected, the two were not exactly correlated to one another. To infer from this that one of them must be dropped as in some way impossible would be absurd: we select between them according to the purposes we want served.²⁶

J.C. Maxwell takes a similar view to Scott-Taggart; however, he contends that it is in Mandeville's distinction between morals and politics that a genuinely utilitarian doctrine can be found in his work. Maxwell traces Mandeville's position to Bayle and the Calvinist segregation of grace and nature. Bayle's argument, in his

on the dissolute Manners of the greatest Part of his Followers, would have it, that by Pleasures he could have understood nothing but sensual Ones, and the Gratification of our Passions. I shall not decide their Quarrel, but am of Opinion, that whether Men be good or bad, what they take delight in is the Pleasure, and not to look out for any further Etymology from the learned Languages, I believe an *Englishman* may justly call every Thing a Pleasure that pleases him, and according to this Definition we ought to dispute no more about Mens Pleasures than their Tastes: *Trabit sua quemque Voluptas.*, *The Fable of the Bees*, I, pp. 147-8. As will be seen later in this chapter, those in the French Epicurean tradition, such as Saint-Evremond, were more elastic in their definition of virtue than were Trenchard, Gordon and Mandeville.

²⁵Ibid., I, pp. xlvi-xxvi.

Miscellaneous Reflections on the Comet, taken up by Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees*, was that as human nature was inherently corrupt a legislature could never prevent sin and its sole business, therefore, was to prevent sin being harmful to society.²⁷ As already indicated, this dual morality of rigorism and utilitarianism was also present in the work of Jansenist writers, who applied this distinction to all the social and political relationships which bound men together and absented it only from the realm of man's relationship with God. Whether or not Mandeville and Gordon seriously subscribed to this dual morality is a difficult question to answer conclusively and is perhaps one which they themselves would have had some trouble in answering. They both appear to have been influenced by a Calvinist or Jansenist theological distinction but they certainly did not accept that distinction on theological grounds, and neither man endorsed the doctrine of efficacious grace. Nor does it seem that either used the distinction merely as a cipher for the expression of his disgust with mankind. Instead it would appear that as arch-pragmatists, but arch-pragmatists in the cause of principles such as religious toleration, they saw no difficulty in judging actions by a dual set of criteria. In arriving at this position they were almost undoubtedly influenced by Bayle, whom both greatly admired, particularly for his views on toleration, despite his absolutist sympathies.

²⁶M.J. Scott-Taggart, 'Mandeville: Cynic or Fool?', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 16 (1966), 221-232, at 228. See also Malcolm Jack, 'Religion and Ethics in Mandeville', in *Mandeville Studies*, ed. I. Primer (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 34-42.

²⁷See J.C. Maxwell, 'Ethics and Politics in Mandeville', *Philosophy* 26 (1951), 242-252.

Like his Jansenist forerunners, Bayle's scepticism about man's capacity for virtue went hand in hand with a marked political conservatism. In his entry on Hobbes in the *Dictionary* he commended the philosopher's absolutist doctrine, demurring ostensibly on the grounds of the system's impracticability, and, as previously noted, his admiration for Louis XIV evoked surprise from both Mandeville and Gordon. Nor was he reluctant to countenance morally dubious actions when carried out for reasons of state:

Now to know how these Politicks agree with the Eternal Laws of Morality, and how such a contrariety between the Duties of Private Reasons and the Duties of Sovereigns does not destroy the Certainty of the immutable Notions of Honesty and Virtue, is another Question. 'Tis enough to say, that as Humane Societies are now constituted, Publick Interest is a Sun, with respect to general Virtues; and that these Virtues are Stars, which disappear in the Presence of the Sun.²⁸

Mandeville and Gordon were at one with him in accepting that those who held power had sometimes to resort to measures inconsistent with accepted moral standards and, indeed, on occasion had a duty to do so.²⁹

At the same time, Bayle sought to show that it was in the interest of a ruler to uphold a policy of toleration on matters of religion, since religious principles and reason played so little a part in determining men's actions, while the opposite course, persecution, conferred only odium on a governor. In his *Miscellaneous Reflections on the Comet*, he rejected the view that religion was the bond which held society together and kept men in check, as witnessed by the many examples of

²⁸Pierre Bayle, *An Historical and Critical Dictionary*, 4 vols. (London, 1710), II, p. 1169. See also *Philosophy and the state in France*, pp. 413-15.

believers who behaved more immorally than unbelievers.³⁰ This being the case, a governor could safely leave men to act as rulers of their own consciences since, Bayle argued, it was possible that even a society of atheists would observe all the civil and moral duties that other societies did, provided crimes were severely punished and honour and infamy were annexed to certain conduct.³¹ Gordon took this as an article of faith and argued throughout his life that loyal subjects who professed a faith other than that of the established Church, and specifically Dissenters, should be allowed all the civil rights and access to public office enjoyed by Anglicans, since they posed no threat to the nation:

For the Life of me, I cannot find how any Man's believing or not believing the Christian Religion, make the Foundation of his Majesty's government (I suppose they mean his Title to the Crown) a Bit the better or the worse. I take it, his present Majesty reigns over us by a better Title than any one Prince in the World has to reign over his Subjects: For he was called in by the united Consent and Desire of all Orders and Degrees of Men, for the Protection, as I observed before, of our Religious and Civil Rights and Liberties, which, before the late happy Revolution, we had no Security that we should enjoy an Hour: And it being one of those Liberties, that every Man should serve God his own way (not prejudicial to Society) and he having a Right to exercise this Liberty, I can by no means understand how his using it can at all alter the King's Title to the Crown, altho' it should carry him even to a Disbelief of the Christian Religion.

He usually, like most other advocates of freedom of conscience of his day, excluded 'papists' when making a plea for toleration. However, he did so on political rather than theological grounds, believing that popery instituted a parallel

²⁹See *The Works of Sallust*, p. 91-8 and *The Fable of the Bees*, II, pp. 333-4. All see chapter 7 of this thesis.

³⁰Bayle was also concerned in *Miscellaneous Reflections* with exposing the folly of superstition and the way in which temporal and spiritual authorities exploited men's superstitious beliefs in order to enhance their power. As already seen in chapter 4, this was an issue which appeared as a persistent theme in Trenchard's writing and may possibly have been influenced by Bayle. It features in a number of *Cato's Letters*, see for example nos. 77, 78 and 79, as well as the subject of separate pamphlets, including his *The Natural History of Superstition*.

power structure which both rivalled the temporal authority and worked in tandem with absolute rule. He defined papists, therefore, as all those, such as High Church Anglicans, who subscribed to this idea of a rival hierarchy of power. Theoretically this meant that Catholics who acknowledged only one authority, that of the state, at least in so far as it related to their status as subjects rather than as communicants, should be allowed the same freedom of worship as their Anglican neighbours. Gordon conceded this in one of his pamphlets and even argued that atheists should be free from persecution:

[Man] has a Liberty to receive the Sacrament according to the way of the Church of *England*, or according to the way of the Church of *Rome*, or not at all, but he may serve God without either Bread or Wine; and it is his Right to be protected in the Exercise of this Liberty, provided that in so doing he hurt no Man.³²

Elsewhere he criticised Henry III for his punitive taxation of English Jews, defending them as prime movers in the creation of the nation's prosperity and decrying the fact they had fallen victim to the evil of bigotry:

Nor do I find that they [Jewish merchants] were ever more exacting, or in greater haste for wealth, than most other Traders generally are: It was no crime in them to be more knowing. But they were the Objects of religious hate, which never shews mercy, nor speaks truth.³³

Gordon's sentiments and reasoned arguments are ones which obviously echo Bayle, as do those expressed by Mandeville. The author of *The Fable of the Bees* borrowed from Bayle when asserting that a society of atheists would live no worse,

³¹*Miscellaneous Reflections*, II, p. 349.

³²Thomas Gordon, 'Remarks upon two late Presentments of the Grand-Jury of the County of Middlesex', *A Cordial for Low-Spirits*, 2 vols. (London, 1751), II, pp. 197-8. Gordon was responding to criticism from the Middlesex Grand Jury regarding his anti-clericalism, which the Jurymen interpreted as an indication of disloyalty to the Crown.

³³Thomas Gordon, *History of England*, BL, MS Add. 20780, p. 241.

and possibly even better, than a society of believers. Bayle, when he pressed this view, pointed in evidence to the regularity with which the principles of the Gospel were disregarded in Christian society. Although men paid lip service to these principles they conducted themselves according to a very different, and indeed contrary, code. War, he argued, was incompatible with the tenets of Christianity yet Christian armies were as bloodthirsty and rapacious as any others. Bayle was particularly disgusted by the savagery of the crusaders, a sentiment which was shared by Gordon who suggested the good done to the world by the conversion of pagans to Christianity was counterbalanced by the perversion of Christianity into popery:

Did the Worst Follies and Inventions of Paganism, from its beginning to this Day, ever commit half the spoil, or shed half the blood that some Popes have shed. A single massacre proceeding from the spirit of popery can't be matched in cruelty or number with the whole of paganism, including pagan human sacrifices.³⁴

Gordon agreed with Bayle that men were not restrained by religion because they were ruled by their passions rather than by fixed principles. Men bent their principles to serve their interests and they therefore bore scant relation to men's actions. Bayle pointed out that Christ's teaching gave no mandate to Christians to persecute either each other or pagans yet, both he and Gordon insisted, they did so purely in furtherance of their own selfish ends. One of *Cato's Letters* written by Gordon takes as its theme 'Men not ruled by Principle, but by Passion' and,

³⁴Ibid., p. 208. For Bayle see *Miscellaneous Reflections*, I, pp. 280-5.

quoting from Bayle's entry on Epicurus in the *Dictionary*, draws out an argument for toleration and against ecclesiastical authority.³⁵

Both Mandeville and Gordon also seem to have followed Bayle in arguing that honour carried a dual meaning, one moral and true and the other socially determined and false and that the two were mutually incompatible. Bayle argued that atheists were as capable of worldly honour as Christians, since it was merely a product of human construction, erected on the foundations of natural temperament, self-love and education. His argument that male honour, honour of the sword, was repugnant to Christian precepts was taken up by Mandeville and used as the central premise of his *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War*.

Gordon and Mandeville made a further criticism, however, and attacked worldly honour not only on rigorist grounds but also on utilitarian ones, arguing that it was outdated and no longer relevant in its present form to a society transformed by a financial revolution. It arose because it met the needs of a feudal society, where the bonds which bound men together were those of arms. However in a commercial society, where the ties which united men were those of trade, a different sort of honour was needed, one which made it incumbent on men to

³⁵The quotation Gordon uses is 'Multitudes of Christians believe well, and live ill: But Epicurus and his followers had, on the contrary, very ill opinions, and yet lived well.', *CL*, I, no. 44, pp. 298-9. The title of Gordon's letter paraphrases Bayle's pronouncement: 'You may call Man a reasonable Creature, as long as you please: Still it's true, he hardly ever acts by fixt Principles.', *Miscellaneous Reflections*, I, p. 274. It was also cited by Mandeville, who observed: 'Mr. Bayle has endeavour'd to prove at large in his Reflexions on Comets: That Man is so unaccountable a Creature as to act most commonly against his Principle', *The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 167.

honour their contracts and their debts. Laws already existed for this purpose but honour was a more compelling force than legal strictures, as shown, both Mandeville and Gordon pointed out, by the flouting of the proscription against duelling. They both derided those fashionable men who although as scrupulous as their 'polite ancestors' in paying their gambling debts, regarding it as a 'point of honour', were without conscience when it came to settling their bills with honest tradesmen:

False honour has more power over men than laws have; and those who despise all the ties of laws, and of religion and humanity, are often very exact in observing all the fantastical and wicked rules of false honour. There are no debts so punctually paid as those contracted at play: though there are express laws against play, and against paying of money won at play; nay, 'tis penal to pay such debts. And yet those that are thus exact in paying to their own ruin, and in defiance of law, whatever debts they contract to avowed sharpers, who live by cheating and picking pockets, and are the destruction of families, and a publick nuisance: I say, those men thus exact in unrighteousness and their own wrong, shall run in debt to honest tradesmen, without any purpose of paying them, and, unconcerned, see them broke, imprisoned and, undone, for want of such payment. So lawlessly just are they to rogues that ruin them, and so barbarously unjust to industrious and credulous men, who feed and clothe them!³⁶

Bayle's work enjoyed a mixed reception in England. Initially the philosopher was celebrated on account of his condemnation of Catholic persecution of Protestants, yet when he later criticised Protestant persecution of Catholics he met with a different response. However a group of notable French exiles, which included Saint-Evremond, were instrumental in spreading Bayle's fame and defending his reputation from accusations of atheism.³⁷ Saint-Evremond, a contemporary of both

³⁶CL, I, no. 57, p. 390. For Mandeville see *The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 222 and *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour, and the Usefulness of Christianity in War* (London, 1732), p. 90.

³⁷See L.P. Courtines, *Bayle's Relations with England and the English* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 41.

Bayle and the French Catholic moralistes already discussed, also figures significantly in the work of both Mandeville and Gordon.³⁸ He shared the sceptical outlook of Jansenist writers, that man's reason was inadequate to the task of acquiring final truth, whether of the external world, of himself or, most especially, of God.³⁹ However, although he deplored 'infamous interest', or what might be called 'unenlightened self-interest', he was equally critical of Jansenists such as Pascal who condemned man's attempt to lose himself and knowledge of his wretchedness and mortality in *divertissement*.⁴⁰ He believed both the inward life and a life spent on the single-minded pursuit of worldly pleasure were forms of self-absorption, in different guises, and found them equally distasteful. Instead he favoured a doctrine of moderation and he regarded this as the essence of a moral life.⁴¹

He argued that Jansenists recommended too rigorous a morality and levelled at them the same criticism made of Mandeville by many of his contemporaries, that everything will be vice to us if 'we frame to our selves an idea of virtue that the

³⁸Mandeville mentions Saint-Evremond in *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, p. 119. F.B. Kaye suggests that Mandeville may have drawn on Saint-Evremond for his defence of luxury. See *The Fable of the Bees*, pp. xciv, cx. Gordon refers to Pierre Desmaizeaux's translation of Saint-Evremond's works in *Cato's Letters*, II, no. 71, p. 522 and in *The Works of Tacitus*, II, p. 138.

³⁹See Saint-Evremond, *The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, 2 vols. (London, 1700), I, p. 301.

⁴⁰Saint-Evremond argued: '[A] Man must make but very few Reflexions upon Life, if he designs to pass it happily; nay, he ought to use a quite different Conduct: He must often steal, as it were, from himself, and amongst the Pleasure that Foreign Objects give him, forget the Knowledge of his own Misfortunes', *The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, II, p. 123.

⁴¹See *ibid.*, II, p. 417. Elsewhere, although Saint-Evremond agrees with those that say man can live with little, he does not commend a life of austerity. A middle way was best: '[T]he possession of Goods is not to be condemned, but our Slavery and Subjection to them; it is not Poverty will make us Wise, it may take from us, indeed, the Opportunity of committing some Faults; but there are others which it cannot remedy.', 'An Essay in Vindication of Epicurus, and his Doctrine', *Epicurus's Morals* [trans. Mr. Johnson], p. 174.

World never practis'd'.⁴² Instead he urged a more moderate Christian ethic, 'neither too Severe, nor too Indulgent', which acknowledged the reality of human nature but at the same time allowed that man was capable of virtue. In Epicurus however, whom he greatly admired, he found a philosophical system which both spoke of men as they really were, driven by their passions, and showed them how they might live better.⁴³ While Mandeville and Trenchard and Gordon drew on the sensationalism of Hobbes, Saint-Evremond, although he greatly esteemed the 'genius' of the author of *Leviathan*, believed his doctrines to be a danger to society's morals. He looked instead to Epicurus, agreeing that 'All our Actions have no real Object, but Pleasure ... 'Tis that alone which makes us active, and excites Industry: 'Tis that which gives Motion to all the Universe.'⁴⁴ Epicurus, however, offered a moral context that was missing from Hobbes. He showed that pleasure was to be found in a life lived virtuously. Saint-Evremond complained people misunderstood the philosopher in believing that he taught that sensual pleasure was the end of man. He noted, however, that some had grasped Epicurus' meaning and he observed approvingly of these commentators: 'They have fully proved his Pleasure to be as severe as the Stoicks Vertue'.⁴⁵ As a keen student of human nature, however, he realised that merely to declaim against vice and preach up virtue was an ineffectual method of attempting to reform man. Particularly since, as Mandeville and Gordon were later to do, he dismissed the arguments of

⁴²*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, p. 494.

⁴³Speaking of Epicurus, Saint-Evremond claimed 'of all the Opinions of Philosophies concerning the sovereign Good, none appears to me so rational as his', *ibid.*, I, p. 390.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, II, p. 315.

⁴⁵'An Essay in Vindication of Epicurus', p. 164. Presumably it was to commentators such as Gassendi that Saint-Evremond referred when he commended their interpretation of Epicurus' philosophy.

those who extolled the virtue of the ancient world and insisted that corruption was as old as man himself.⁴⁶ He insisted that no-one venerated the works of the ancients more than he 'but the Difference of Religion, Government, Customs and Manners, have introduced so great a Change in the World, that we must go as it were upon a new System to suit with the Inclination and Genius of the present Age.'⁴⁷

Given, therefore, that man was motivated purely by selfish concerns, Saint-Evremond argued that if he was to be brought to choose virtue over vice he had to be shown that it was in his own interest to do so; that, at small cost to himself, man would be the gainer either materially or in the opinion of others.⁴⁸ Gordon was later to argue in similar terms, insisting that 'virtue, to be followed, must be endowed, and her credit is best secured by her interest', not forgetting the advice that punitive laws were an effective mechanism for ensuring that men realised it was in their interest to restrain their selfish desires.⁴⁹ A difference in tone, however, suggests that Saint-Evremond, who did not subscribe to the doctrine of efficacious grace, appears to have believed there was genuine merit in such virtue, since man was capable of no other.⁵⁰ This is the major point of divergence between Trenchard and Gordon on the one hand and Saint-Evremond on the other. Following Epicurus, Saint-Evremond believed that the passions could give rise to

⁴⁶'I am very well satisfied, that the Corruption of Mankind has in all times of the World been as great as it is at present, that the first Ages beheld the first Adulterers, and the Vices of our times are nothing but Copies of the former', *ibid.*, I, p. 449. For Mandeville see *The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 229 and for Trenchard and Gordon see *The Independent Whig*, p. 216.

⁴⁷*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, p. 421; also see II, p. 47.

⁴⁸See *ibid.*, I, pp. 490-2.

⁴⁹*CL*, I, no. 63, p. 436.

virtue.⁵¹ He conceded, however, that it was not an easy task to reconcile the passions and virtue: 'We ought to commend the Dexterity of those who know to accommodate them together'.⁵² Trenchard and Gordon, in keeping with Jansenist thinking, believed self-denial, of which few men were capable, was the only route to true virtue.⁵³ They refused to attribute any intrinsic moral value to 'virtuous' actions performed from motives of self-interest. Such actions had value but it was purely utilitarian. The passions could only give rise to a simulacrum of virtue. However, this was all that society required.⁵⁴ Like Mandeville, Trenchard and Gordon appear to have felt an aversion to blurring the difference between rigoristic and utilitarian standards. To do so, was to allow 'a vast Inlet to Hypocrisy'.⁵⁵

Yet despite the different interpretations of virtue given by Trenchard and Gordon, on the one hand, and Saint-Evremond, on the other, they were agreed that to expect rigid virtue of men, especially the great, was extremely foolish. Saint-Evremond argued that men should be strict with themselves but show forbearance to others and he was particularly scathing about those who declaimed against everything that passed at Court but refused to quit it:

⁵⁰See *The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, II, p. 39.

⁵¹He argued that Epicurus, unlike the Stoics and other philosophers, asserted that the passions were necessary to the soul and were the seeds of virtue, 'An Essay in Vindication of Epicurus', p. 170.

⁵²*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, p. 488.

⁵³However, neither Trenchard nor Gordon believed there was a true virtue of which only an elect number were capable. Like Mandeville, they rejected the doctrine of predestination. See, for example, *CL*, II, no. 110, pp. 776-7. In *The Fable of the Bees*, Mandeville evaded a pronouncement on predestination by dismissing it as an 'inexplicable Mystery', II, pp. 236, 252. However in another work he argued nothing was so inconsistent with the idea of a just and good God than the idea that some men were predestined for damnation. See *Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church, and National Happiness*, pp. 92-3.

⁵⁴See *CL*, I, no. 40, p. 282.

⁵⁵*The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 331.

I know that Ingratitude and Avarice are abominable Qualities; but since they are so common in the World, either you must resolve to bear with them; or retire into a Desart, and carry that Virtue along with you into your Retirement which will make you hated at Court.⁵⁶

Trenchard and Gordon were similarly pragmatic, accepting that a measure of corruption was an inevitable aspect of Court life. They believed that complaints against corruption were justified only when abuses became so gross that they exceeded the bounds of safety, that is when they threatened to subvert the constitution and when criticism was free of party bias.⁵⁷ Mandeville, no less a realist, also concurred with Saint-Evremond and considered that for men to suppose ministers should be virtuous betrayed 'great Ignorance in human Affairs.'⁵⁸

However, it was not merely a similar moral philosophy which allowed Trenchard and Gordon, Mandeville and Saint-Evremond to countenance an element of corruption in government. They also had in common republican sympathies. The support of Trenchard and Gordon, and that of Mandeville, for the limited monarchy

⁵⁶*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, pp. 490 and also 291. See too p. 293: 'As long as you are engaged in the World, you must comply with its Maxims, because nothing turns less to Account, than the Wisdom of those Persons, who set up for Reformers of the Age'.

⁵⁷For example, for Gordon, see *The Humourist*, II, p. 117 and, for Trenchard, see 'Seasonable Advice to the Electors of Great Britain', *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard, Esq., and Thomas Gordon, Esq.*, I, p. 335.

⁵⁸In *The Fable of the Bees*, Mandeville has his mouthpiece, Cleomenes, argue: 'If Virtue, Religion and future Happiness were sought after by the Generality of Mankind, with the same Sollicitude, as sensual Pleasure, Politeness, and worldly Glory are, it would certainly be best, that none but Men of good Lives, and known Ability, should have any Place in the government whatever: But to expect that this ever should happen, or to live in hopes of it in a large, opulent and flourishing Kingdom, is to betray great Ignorance in human Affairs ... The best of all then not being to be had, let us look out for the next best, and we shall find, that of all possible Means to secure and perpetuate to nations their Establishment, and whatever they value, there is no better Method than with wise Laws to guard and entrench their constitution, and continue such Forms of Administration, that the

enjoyed by Britain has already been discussed in the previous chapter. In the case of Saint-Evremond, although he had fought on the royalist side during the Fronde he was nevertheless suspected of republican leanings. However, the admiration displayed in his reflections on the history of the reign of the Emperor Augustus suggests he too favoured a limited monarchy. He commended Augustus for allowing the senate and the people a voice in government and for grasping what both Saint-Evremond and Trenchard and Gordon regarded as the secret of good government, that a governor served his own best interests by serving those of the governed. Human nature being what it was, unless whoever held power understood this he would inevitably pursue a path of narrow self-interest which was at odds with that of the public. For Augustus, Saint-Evremond wrote, 'The Good of the State was his first Thought', by which he meant the benefit of those who composed the state:

His own [benefit] first; for it is not reasonable that a Man shou'd quit the Pleasures of a private Life, to abandon himself to the Cares of the Publick, if he does not find his Advantage in the foot of the Account. And next, that of his People, which he imagined could not be absolutely separated from his own.⁵⁹

Trenchard was later to second this judgement, arguing:

The only secret therefore in forming a free government, is to make the interests of the governors and the governed the same, as far as human policy can contrive. Liberty cannot be preserved any other way. Men have long found, from the weakness and depravity of themselves and one another, that most men will act for interest against duty, as often as they dare.⁶⁰

Common-Weal can receive no great Detriment from the Want of knowledge or Probity of Ministers, if any of them should prove less able or honest, than they could wish them.', II, p. 335.

⁵⁹*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, p. 83.

Neither Trenchard nor Gordon shared Saint-Evremond's admiration for Augustus. They could hardly have been expected to endorse imperial rule no matter how benign but they agreed with his opinion that if there was a cost to be met in moral terms for securing a limited monarchy, and for barring the way to absolutism, it was a price worth paying. Paralleling the later practice of Trenchard and Gordon, Saint-Evremond answered those who clamoured for a more virtuous government by invoking classical precedent to show that it was better to suffer some evils in a free society rather than to seek to eradicate them and thereby perhaps destabilise the constitution and allow an inroad to tyranny:

This just *Cato*, who might have saved his Country, if he cou'd have contented himself with making his Citizens less virtuous, destroy'd both that and himself, by endeavouring to no purpose to make them virtuous. A Man of a less perfect Probity, who cou'd have born with the Vices of some particular Persons, had hindred a general Oppression. It was necessary to connive at the Irregularities of some in Power to prevent Tyranny, for by that means the Republick might have been preserved; 'twould have been a corrupt one, I confess, but still it had been a Republick.⁶¹

So too, Gordon felt it preferable to bear with a corrupt Whig administration headed by Walpole rather than mount a moral crusade which might end in the demise of Britain's limited monarchy and the establishment of absolute rule under the Pretender. Echoing Saint-Evremond he argued that although Cato of Utica's virtue was proverbial, 'Yet by carrying it further than the times would bear, he sometimes hurt what he loved beyond his Life, even Liberty, and his Country'.⁶²

⁶⁰CL, I, no. 60, p. 417.

⁶¹*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, p. 489.

⁶²*The Works of Sallust*, p. 94. Gordon also cited the example of Galbo's unseasonable attempt at reviving the austere virtue of his ancestors, CL, I, no. 41, p. 283. It should be remembered that the adoption of the pseudonym 'Cato' by Trenchard and Gordon did not necessarily imply a commitment to classical republican principles; the employment of classical pseudonyms was a literary convention. As already noted (see chapter 1 of this thesis) the name was also used by Whig

In his defence of luxury Saint-Evremond also prefigured some of the arguments fielded by Mandeville and Trenchard and Gordon. Countering those who lauded the frugality of the early Romans, he redrew this famous abstinence as the product of dullness rather than virtue. It was not freely chosen but merely the result of an unexpanded consciousness, so that the desires of the ancients, although as unrestrained as those of the moderns, settled on crude objects:

As for that Frugality which is so extremely boasted of, it was not a retrenchment of Superfluities, or a voluntary Abstinence from things agreeable, but a gross use of what they enjoyed ... they were not ambitious after Riches, because they did not understand them; they were content with a little, because they conceived no more.⁶³

Mandeville and Trenchard and Gordon in the same manner contrasted the material and intellectual impoverishment of former times with the riches enjoyed by men of the present day. Man had become a more complex creature, fashioned by his boundless desires, and he required more sophisticated forms of stimulation. In turn the satisfaction of more refined desires generated work for the common man, so that, in Gordon's words, 'the luxury of the rich becomes the bread of the poor', thus contributing to the wealth, and therefore power, of the nation and its prestige abroad.⁶⁴ There was also agreement between Trenchard and Gordon, Mandeville and Saint-Evremond that frugality was only possible in small states and was incompatible with a large and thriving nation. So too they concurred in debunking the frequently cited model of Dutch frugality, arguing that it was borne of necessity

ministry pamphleteers. The historical Cato stood against the imperial rule of Julius Caesar. By casting the Pretender as Caesar, Court Writers were able to allot themselves the role of 'Cato', republican patriot.

⁶³*The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁴*CL*, I, no. 67, p. 473. See also No. 71, p. 514. For Mandeville's justification of luxury see *The Fable of the Bees*, p. 355 and, particularly, Remarks P, Q and X.

and that the Republic was held together not by virtue but by fear of Spain and France.⁶⁵

Trenchard, Gordon and Mandeville would also have been in accord with Saint-Evremond's views on religious tolerance, which were in line with his relaxed attitude towards the weaknesses of human nature and were characterised by an absence of concern with narrow doctrinal issues. He contended that Calvinism and Catholicism were differently grounded on the same good principles and called for a reconciliation between the two Churches, declaring he did not hate a heretic because he differed from him in religion, rather: 'I Love him because he agrees with me in the Fundamentals'.⁶⁶ As stalwart opponents of bigotry, an evil they believed synonymous with the Society of Jesus, both Mandeville and Gordon were much taken by Saint-Evremond's witty satire on Jesuit pretensions to spiritual and temporal authority. Gordon considered the declaration of the Jesuit Father Canaye to the Marshal D'Hocquincourt, related by Saint-Evremond, to be 'open and instructive' and Mandeville's reference to the tale suggests he shared this view.⁶⁷

⁶⁵For 'Cato' see *CL*, I, no. 85, p. 617; for Mandeville, see *The Fable of the Bees*, Remark Q; and for Saint-Evremond see *The Works of Mr. de St. Evremond*, I, pp. 30, 147-8

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, II, p. 37 and also 42-3.

⁶⁷*The Works of Tacitus*, p. 138. In *An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour*, p. 119, Mandeville has Cleomenes remark: 'The Roman Pastors, who keep their Flocks in the Dark, teach them blind Obedience, and never vouchsafe to argue with 'em any more than if they were real Sheep. They don't advise Men to read the Bible, but such Books of Devotion as their Priests shall think proper for them; and are so far from appealing to their Judgment, that they conjure them, on Pain of Damnation, never to trust their Reason, but implicitly to believe whatever the Church shall require of them.' To which Horatio replies: 'You put me in Mind of Father Canaye, the Jesuit in St. Evremond. No Reason! No Reason at all!'

Both Trenchard and Gordon and Mandeville found in Saint-Evremond what was also present in the French Catholic moralistes and Bayle, a pragmatic attitude towards human nature which appreciated that its weaknesses might, if properly understood and directed, supply the part of genuine public-spirited virtue. They too dismissed utopian systems founded on virtue as hopelessly unrealistic and looked instead to the enlightened self-interest of governors and governed alike as the basis of a society capable of allowing men the security and stability necessary for a good life.⁶⁸ Moreover, they found in these writers a shared commitment to religious toleration, particularly strong in the case of Saint-Evremond and Bayle, and an utilitarian rationale for its institution.⁶⁹ Indeed Gordon followed Bayle's lead in being outstanding for his day both for the explicitness of his expression and the degree of toleration he was prepared to urge, extending it even to atheists, Jews and, ultimately, loyal Catholics. That Mandeville was no less marked an advocate of toleration is obvious from his insistence on the moral parity of atheists and Christians, although his stance is more often implicit than explicit and less muscularly polemic than Gordon. It would seem apparent, therefore, that the authors of *Cato's Letters* and *The Fable of the Bees* were shaped by a number of common influences, writers who, despite their differences, were united by shared

⁶⁸See, for example, Bayle: 'Let a Man do the best he can, let him build better Systems than *Plato's* Republick, *More's* Utopia or *Campanella's* Common-wealth of the Sun, &c. All these fine Ideas will be found short and deficient when they come to be reduc'd to Practice: The Passions of Men, that arise from one another in a prodigious Variety, would presently ruin the hopes that these fine systems might give us.', *Dictionary*, II, p. 1679; Mandeville: 'Then leave Complaints: Fools only strive/To make a Great an Honest Hive/T'enjoy the World's Conveniences/Be fam'd in War, yet live in Ease/Without great Vices, is a vain/EUTOPIA seated in the Brain.', *The Fable of the Bees*, I, p. 28; and Trenchard: 'We have an excellent constitution at present; and if not the best which can be formed in an utopian commonwealth, yet I doubt the best that we are capable of receiving.', *CL*, I, no. 80, p. 584.

⁶⁹That is, they believed a wide toleration contributed to the wealth and well-being of society.

principles which are also fundamental to the thinking of Trenchard, Gordon and Mandeville.

Chapter VII

The Janus Face of Republicanism

As already observed in chapter one of this thesis, the tunnel vision approach of focusing on the language used by a writer runs the risk of misunderstanding his intended meaning. This is particularly risky when the language invoked is ambiguous and open to different construction, as in the case of the 'classical republicanism' of Machiavelli and Tacitus. It is necessary, therefore, to look at the variety of ways in which these two writers were interpreted historically in order to identify the range of meanings that were available to Trenchard and Gordon. And to understand how Trenchard and Gordon read Machiavelli and Tacitus it is necessary to see how these writers spoke to their main concerns.

Clearly it is unnecessary to confine oneself to a reading of *The Prince* to realise that there are strong autocratic elements in Machiavelli's republicanism. Since the sixteenth century both monarchists and republicans in western Europe had studied Machiavelli's works for lessons in statecraft, even whilst many of them denounced him for his immorality and irreligion. Machiavelli may have favoured republican government but not at any price and not for every people. He appealed to men who were ideological opponents precisely because the goal of his doctrine was political stability rather than the establishment of a particular form of government. The latter, he suggested, was contingent on circumstance. So whilst in *The Discourses* he made it clear that republics, because of their greater tendency to stability, were to be favoured over principalities, he was equally adamant that there were times in

the life of a state which necessitated the imposition of princely rule. Adaptability was the solution he offered to the problem of sustaining the longevity of a state and its validity must have been immediately apparent to English commonwealthmen who had accommodated themselves to the political reality imposed by the Revolution Settlement. For admirers of Machiavelli, such as Trenchard and Gordon, who recognised that a revival of Roman virtue in eighteenth century England was not a realistic prospect, the authoritarian and 'politic' elements in his work did not go unnoticed but rather contributed to his value as a political theorist to men who were essentially pragmatic supporters of a limited monarchy rather than republican idealists.¹

The Roman historian and moralist Tacitus, of course, was also read as an authority by monarchists and republicans alike and his name was frequently coupled with

¹It must be noted that in late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century England the term 'republican' did not necessarily signify, and indeed seldom signified, a doctrinaire rejection of monarchy. To be a republican meant merely to be an opponent of absolute monarchy. As already shown in previous chapters, 'classical republicans' of this period were by no means advocates of democratic republicanism or proponents of 'levelling' principles. For many 'republicans' a limited monarchy, which served the public interest rather than the private interest of one individual, was perfectly consistent with their political ideals. The same held true for the terms 'commonwealth' and 'commonwealthmen', which were not incompatible with a commitment to limited monarchy. Indeed Robert Molesworth insisted Britain was a commonwealth under Queen Anne, since the form of government it enjoyed aimed at the good of all rather than just one or a few. In his opinion those who denied it to be a commonwealth, adopting the appellation 'limited monarchy' instead, were merely fearful of being suspected of harbouring an enmity towards the established order: 'A true *Whig* is not afraid of the Name of a *Commonwealthman*, because so many foolish People, who know not what it means, run it down: The *Anarchy* and *Confusion* which these Nations fell into near Sixty Years ago and which was *falsly* called a *Commonwealth*, frightening them out of the true Construction of the Word...For where in the very *Frame* of the *Constitution*, the Good of the *Whole* is taken care of by the *Whole* (as 'tis in our Case) the having a *King* or *Queen* at the Head of it, alters not the Case; and the softening of it by calling it a *Limited Monarchy*, seems a Kind of Contradiction in Terms, invented to please some weak and doubting persons.' Molesworth's definition of a commonwealth comes in the preface to his English translation of the *Franco-Gallia* of the Huguenot historian Hotman, who himself drew on Tacitus' *Germania* in order to argue that the French or Frankish tradition of government was rooted in a system of elective monarchy and in rule by the consent of the people. First printed in 1711 and again in 1721, Molesworth's preface defends the government of the day and contrasts Britain's liberty and prosperity with the civil, religious and economic abuses suffered by the French under absolute rule. See Francis Hotoman, *Franco-Gallia*, trans. Robert Molesworth (London, 1721), p. viii.

that of Machiavelli, both in praise and in vilification. What they had in common was that both men were political pragmatists who preferred to consider men as they were, rather than as moralists might wish them to be, and who were primarily concerned with achieving and maintaining political stability rather than with visions of an ideal state. They offered men knowledge of the nature and operation of power and then stood back and left their pupils to decide whether to make use of that knowledge.

Guicciardini was one of the first to draw attention to Tacitus' own ambiguous politics, to the fact that he might be read as other than a republican writer, and to his utility for both rulers and ruled alike: 'Tacitus teaches those who live under tyrants the mode of life and how to govern oneself prudently, and he teaches tyrants how to establish tyranny.'² After Machiavelli's name was placed on the Catholic Church's *Index* of prohibited works in 1559 many writers looked to Tacitus, whose newly discovered later books of the *Histories* and the *Annals* were first published in 1515, as a guide to politics and to questions of political morality.

One modern historian has seen the growing popularity of Tacitus between 1580 and 1680, when his maxims were widely used by writers on politics to illustrate 'Machiavellian' tenets, as a ruse 'to hide Machiavelli under the mask of Tacitus, and his prince under the figure of Tiberius.'³ Whilst in the 1920s Giuseppe Toffanin theorised, in an elaboration of Guicciardini's observation on the dual nature of Tacitus' lessons, that proponents of Tacitism could be divided into two

²Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, quoted in Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 140.

³Benedetto Croce, *Stòria della età barocca in Italia*, quoted in *Tacitus*, p. 140.

main camps, those of 'red' and 'black' Tacitism. The former, he argued, was a disguised form of republicanism and the latter a disguised form of Machiavellianism. Toffanin's argument however, particularly his account of 'black Tacitism', has received criticism in recent years. One such critic, Alfredo Momigliano, has cautioned against viewing Tacitus as merely a safe alternative to the banned author of *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, as a sort of *ersatz* Machiavelli. Certainly the popularity of Tacitus with Renaissance and later political theorists can not be attributed to the idea that he offered an anodyne version of views officially condemned as poisonous. It is rather that the appeal of both writers appears linked to their attempt to provide men not only with a guide to living in the real world of politics but to accommodating this public life with a private life where different standards applied, where the dictates of accepted morality rather than state interest prevailed. Neither Tacitus nor Machiavelli sought to deny or disguise the inherent immorality of certain acts performed in the interests of the good of the state but showed that they were necessary.⁴ Machiavelli effectively acknowledged that what he shared with Tacitus was a political pragmatism that set them apart from other writers when he commended, as a 'golden saying' of Tacitus, the historian's judgement that 'men have to respect the past but to submit to the present, and, while they should be desirous of having good princes, should put up with them of whatever sort they may turn out to be.'⁵

⁴It is a conscious duality that is perhaps not dissimilar to that found in Jansenist thought and in the ideas of those influenced by Jansenism, such as Mandeville, Trenchard and Gordon. Momigliano has noted the debt owed to Tacitus by French moralists from Charron to La Rochefoucauld, especially in the study of hypocrisy, and has claimed that modern Dutch literature was almost brought to life by contact with the ancient historian. See A. Momigliano, 'Tacitus and the Tacitist Tradition', *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 109-31.

Tacitus' sentiments were grounded in experience and his own life and career are an object lesson in adapting oneself to the times. While he lamented the loss of Roman virtue, which he like many others attributed to the demise of the Republic, his regret did not prevent him from accepting high public office under imperial rule. He owed his first public honours to Vespasian and during the reign of Titus he was elected quaester, a position which brought with it membership of the Senate. With the succession of Domitian, Tacitus saw himself advanced still further. The emperor appointed him first praetor and then gave him the command of a provincial legion.⁶ He survived too the later years of terror when Domitian's rule descended into tyranny, emerging from that dark period with the prize of Rome's highest office, the consulship. It would seem from this that Tacitus' life, as much as his works, defies easy attempts to categorise him as an unequivocally republican writer and zealous advocate of civic virtue and, in a circular argument, to assume that it was these elements which drew Gordon to him. Equally, it is incorrect to say, as Herbert Benario does, that Gordon's 'Discourses' have little to do with Tacitus and that the Roman historian's work serves merely as a convenient peg from which to hang a political essay and to furnish him with the characters of bad emperors.⁷ Tacitus was much more than this for Gordon. He was, in Gordon's words, 'a masterly Historian, who draws events from their first sources ... a profound Politician who takes off every disguise, and penetrates every artifice'. Essentially what appealed to a political realist such as Gordon was that, in his

⁵Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (London, Penguin, 1983), III, 6, pp. 398-9.

⁶'My official career owed its beginning to Vespasian, its progress to Titus and its further advancement to Domitian. I have no wish to deny this.', Tacitus, *The Histories*, trans. K. Wellesley (London, Penguin, 1964) I.1, p. 15. For an account of Tacitus' life and career see *Tacitus*, pp. 6-28.

⁷See H.W. Benario, 'Gordon's Tacitus', *The Classical Journal*, 72 (1976), 107-114, at 109.

words, 'TACITUS describes things and men as they are'.⁸ He mirrored Gordon's own views: qualified republicanism, political pragmatism based on a searing analysis of human nature and an equally pragmatic, if not to say highly sceptical, approach to organised religion. If one looks at Gordon one sees reflections of Tacitus.

Nostalgia for a passed virtue did not blind Tacitus to the Republic's faults, which he suggested were greater than its advantages, or silence his criticism of its destructive forces, referring caustically to that anarchy 'which fools call freedom'. He believed a wise man recognised that freedom had to be bound by authority and he praised the emperor Nerva for 'having joined together the sovereign power and liberty', a union which appeared the basis of good government. Certainly he harboured few illusions about the likelihood, or desirability, of restoring the Republic, which, he noted, 'was more easily praised than established and that, were it established, it could not possibly endure'.⁹

The *Agricola* might be seen as an indirect defence of Tacitus' own decision to distance himself from a factional and pointless opposition to Domitian and instead to attempt to weather the storm. A justification of his own path of caution and compromise can perhaps be marked in his eulogising of his father-in-law, Agricola, as a man of virtue who served Rome under both good emperors and bad, even one such as Domitian, and in his condemnation of the reckless actions and ostentatious

⁸*The Works of Tacitus*, pp. 10, 18.

⁹See *Dialogue of the Orators*, 40; *Agricola*, 3; *Annals*, IV, 33, quoted in G. Boissier, *Tacitus and other Roman Studies*, trans. W.G. Hutchinson (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1906), pp. 130, 127, 136.

gestures of those who threw their lives away, without profiting the commonwealth, ostensibly in the cause of liberty but in reality to win renown.¹⁰ In his life and in his work he counselled a middle course between rebellion and sycophancy. He despised the latter and believed the former to be futile, as it was to plunge the state into bloodshed and disorder to no good end, since the nature of power was that it corrupted and those who sought to overthrow corrupt rulers in time would very likely become corrupt themselves. Bad rulers, he taught, had to be suffered – the advice so admired by Machiavelli – but a man could avoid placing himself at the mercy of fortune by deploying his political skills in order to counter the worst excesses of autocratic government. Chronicling Tiberius' reign he praised the 'wise and noble part' played by one senator and it is perhaps possible to see a parallel of sorts between Machiavelli's *virtú*, the possession of which enabled men to master fortune and halt the cycle of decay and disorder in a state, and the virtue Tacitus commends in Marcus Lepidus.¹¹

Tacitus was certainly no democratic republican, for in spite of his praise for the Roman people under the ancient Republic he was contemptuous of those he referred to as 'the mob' of his own day. Nor can he accurately be characterised as an aristocratic republican. He had scant admiration for the senatorial class and viewed with distaste their collusive servility which had spurred on rather than reigned in the vicious tendencies of tyrannical emperors.¹² The recurrent image he evokes of a conflict ridden senate, riven by factionalism and petty jealousies, also

¹⁰In the *Annals* Tacitus is less dismissive of rebels and patriot martyrs but no less pessimistic about the outcome of rebellion. See Ronald Syme, *Ten Studies in Tacitus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 131; *Tacitus*, p. 98.

¹¹See Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. M. Grant (London: Penguin, 1956), IV, p. 367.

suggests he had little confidence that should the senate recover its power Rome might hope for wiser government. There is no trace of utopianism in his writing, nor even an outright declaration of his preferred form of government. Instead, he makes it clear that what he considered of primary importance was not an ideological commitment to one constitutional form but having a government capable of maintaining order and stability. The same virtue of ancient Romans that rendered them fit for republican government made them unfit to endure autocratic rule. Different ages, however, called for different forms of government and men had to adapt themselves to the times. Therefore, if the times demanded that ultimately authority should reside in the hands of a strong ruler then men owed him their loyalty, if not their love. It might be said of Tacitus, as he reported Eprius Marcellus had declared of himself 'he remembered the age in which he was born, and the constitution devised by their fathers and grandfathers. Earlier times earned his admiration, the present his allegiance. He prayed for good emperors, but took them as they came.'¹³ In his own voice he justified imperial rule by contrasting it with the alternative, civil strife, observing that 'the interests of peace demanded the concentration of power in the hands of one man'.¹⁴ Later, in recounting Galba's speech adopting Piso as his successor, he has the emperor seek to validate the legitimacy of this act by contending:

If it were possible for our gigantic empire to stand erect and keep its balance in the absence of a ruler, I should be the right sort of person to hand over power to a republican form of government. But in fact we have long ago reached a point where drastic measures are necessary. Hence my

¹²Tacitus' account of the conspiracy of Piso shows his contempt for a degenerate nobility. See *Annals*, XV, 48.

¹³*Histories*, 4, 8. It is a policy, this 'golden' maxim of Tacitus, which is a common theme of all his works. That he attributes it here to Marcellus, a figure he casts in a less than admirable light, perhaps suggests he retained an element of guilt about his own conduct under Domitian, despite his insistence on drawing a distinction between conciliation and collusion.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, I.1, p. 15.

declining years can make Rome no greater gift than a good successor, nor your youth any greater gift than a good emperor.¹⁵

Moreover, despite Tacitus' regard for republican virtue he suggested that in current times it was a potentially dangerous anomaly. He was thus critical of Galba's frugality and severity in the context of his refusal to continue with the accepted practice of paying 'donatives' to the Roman soldiery; to 'buy' them with the lavish gifts of money to which they had become accustomed. Although these were traditional virtues they were out of step with the times and therefore proved ruinous to the state.¹⁶ On the other hand, Otho is presented as a corrupt character, lavish and indulgent, who was nevertheless exemplary because his heroic suicide prevented Rome from again being thrown into civil war.¹⁷

If Tacitus combined respect for the republican virtue of previous generations with scepticism about the utility of Roman virtue in his own day, the opposite was true of his attitude towards the state religion. He never doubted its social utility but he displayed scant respect for the imperial cult and lacked the credulous belief in supernatural portents that was general amongst the patrician classes. His contemptuous view of Roman idolatry, symptomatic of the degeneracy that he contrasted with the untainted simplicity of the Germanic people in his *Germania*, provided inspiration in the sixteenth century to German Lutherans. The *Germania*, which played a significant role in the growth of a sense of national identity during this period, appealed to the desire felt by Luther's 'German nation' for both

¹⁵Ibid., I.16, p. 26.

¹⁶See ibid., I.5 and 18.

¹⁷See ibid., II, 46-9

religious and political liberty.¹⁸ Although Tacitus was notorious for his abhorrence of both Christians and Jews, the former could be read by Protestants as valid criticism of the depravity and duplicity of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁹ In the 'Discourses' which precede Gordon's translation of Tacitus, he defends the historian from charges of irreligion and argues that when religion is pure superstition – as he makes clear elsewhere he believes Catholicism to be – to adhere to it is a revolt from common sense.²⁰

Like Tacitus, Gordon entertained little expectation that calls for a revival of ancient virtue would prove successful and, still less, that if revived it would prove anything other than a potentially destabilising anachronism. This is clear from the use he makes of a translation of Galbo's speech to Piso, which appears in *Cato's Letters*. The moral he sought to draw from Galbo's fate was that the restoration of ancient virtue was impossible and indeed should not be attempted once a people had grown accustomed to a life of plenty. A message which appears aimed at the zealous Tory 'Patriots' he attacked elsewhere and one reinforced by his quotation of Tacitus' observation on Galbo: 'He was ruined by reviving unseasonably the severe virtue of our ancestors'.²¹ Similarly in Gordon's translation of Sallust he rejected the commonplace association of private and public corruption and argued 'they are far from being universally the same; since sometimes the Public is helped, and even saved, by encouraging private Acts of Dishonesty; such as bribing secret or public Enemies with Money ... in the Casuistry of a State, the greater Good cancels

¹⁸See D.A. Kelley, 'Tacitus Noster: 'The *Germania* in the Renaissance and the Reformation', *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*, ed. T.J. Luce and A.J. Woodman (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), 152-167.

¹⁹See *Annals*, XV, pp. 365-6; *Histories*, V. 1-13, pp. 279-88.

the smaller Evil.' Governors, he argued, whose scruples were too refined did a disservice to their country and were unworthy of their position. Ministers were justified in employing any number of immoral practices, at least when directed against a foreign power, as 'Without such Practices they could not serve their Country as they ought'.²² And if civic virtue had faded under a venal ministry it was sometimes more expedient to allow matters to lie rather than throw the nation into turmoil by attempting to retrieve what was lost for ever and in all likelihood had never existed at all. Taken in this light, it seems extremely apt that Gordon should have dedicated his *Tacitus* to Walpole.

Tacitus' lessons had also proved deeply resonant for a great many political thinkers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an age of civil strife, in the form of religious wars, and absolute monarchy. He was a man who spoke to the times and, as Montaigne observed: 'Tacitus can more properly serve a sickly troubled nation like our own is at present: you could often believe that we were the subject of his narrating and berating.'²³ Monarchists as well as republicans were able to claim him as their own. He both legitimised the concentration of power in one individual and criticised the abuse of that power. Equally, at a time when republican idealism had seen itself confronted by political reality, the idea that a strict morality on the part of those who governed was not only unnecessary but sometimes undesirable, if the interests of the state were to be best served, enjoyed widespread appeal amongst both monarchists and their ideological opponents. Tacitus painted human

²⁰See *The Works of Tacitus*, I, p. 23.

²¹*CL*, I, no. 41, p. 283.

nature in dark colours but he also rendered it predictable to a large degree; men could be depended upon always to follow what they believed to be in their own interest. It was this insight that was central to the reason of state philosophy that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Tacitus' works played to the desire of political theorists, and those involved at the heart of government, to discover a science of politics and also provided a lesson in the skills necessary to survive and succeed at Court, whilst retaining at least a semblance of honour. It is not difficult to see why Gordon, like Montaigne, thought Tacitus so relevant to his own day and nor is it difficult to draw parallels between Gordon and earlier Tacitists. An analysis of how his own reading of Tacitus may have been affected by other readings is enlightening. For when one examines other interpretations it becomes clear that Gordon's republicanism was not as one dimensional as the civic humanist paradigm suggests.

Tacitus was studied by those who sought a new science of politics, grounded in actual rather than an ideal human nature, because his doctrine was based on observed political realities and not a vision of the best form of government that could be imagined. Giambattista Vico pointed to Tacitus as one of the formative influences on his thought and believed he should be ranked with Plato:

[F]or with an incomparable metaphysical mind Tacitus contemplates man as he is, Plato as he should be. And as Plato with his universal knowledge explores the parts of nobility which constitute the man of intellectual wisdom, so Tacitus descends into all the counsels of utility whereby, among

²²*The Works of Sallust*, p. 91. As popery was considered allegiance to a foreign power this was obviously intended to serve to legitimise the targeting of those regarded as crypto-Catholics or Jacobites.

²³Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M.A. Screech (London: Penguin: 1987), III.8, p. 1066

the irregular chances of malice and fortune, the man of practical wisdom brings things to good issue.²⁴

Utility and self-interest were central to Vico's concept of human development, constituting its driving forces, and in his *New Science* (1724) he argued monarchy was the form of government best adapted to civilised human nature, as it prevented men from descending into anarchy. He employed Tacitus as an authority in his interpretation of *raison d'état* as a means of achieving just ends and the common good, of submitting the driving forces of politics to natural reason.²⁵ Bodin too, another monarchist admirer of the Roman historian, had drawn on the practical lessons taught by Tacitus, whilst rejecting the 'vainely imagined' model commonwealths of Plato and Thomas More.²⁶ He criticised the lack of attention paid to Tacitus' observations on reason of state arguments and his re-evaluation of the ancient writer was significant in the development of *raison d'état* theory in Renaissance political thought. 'Nothing can appear contemptible', Bodin contended, 'which is bound up with the safety of the State.'²⁷

Bodin's praise of Tacitus, however, contrasted with the condemnation he received from Giovanni Botero and it was the judgement of the latter which set the predominant tone of opinion on Tacitus in seventeenth century Europe, with the exception of England and, to a lesser degree, the Netherlands. Indeed, paradoxically, throughout the period that Tacitism was at its height, from the 1580s to the 1680s, Tacitus himself enjoyed a mixed reception. Men were receptive to

²⁴Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1941), p. 138.

²⁵See Gino Bedani, *Vico Revisited* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1989).

his tenets but more reticent about openly acknowledging their source, particularly after Botero succeeded in inextricably linking Tacitus' name to that of Machiavelli. Yet Botero himself displayed a less than fair or candid approach to Tacitus, commandeering his doctrine whilst inveighing against him.²⁸ In *Ragione di stato* he expressed disapproval at having found during his travels 'Reason of State a constant subject of discussion and to hear the opinions of Niccolô Macchiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted.' The purpose of his discourse, he contended, was to counter the corruption fostered by these two men in the policy and counsel of princes.²⁹ However, instead of repudiating the statecraft of Tacitus and Machiavelli he appropriated it, arguing 'State is a stable rule over a people and Reason of State is the knowledge of the means by which such a dominion may be founded preserved and extended.'³⁰ In this way Botero established an apparent distance between his own views and those of Machiavelli and Tacitus and was thus able to make reason of state doctrine palatable to the Catholic Church - which viewed both men as enemies of Christianity - whilst advising rulers to resort to secrecy, subterfuge and draconian measures, where necessary, in the interest of the state.³¹

In England, as in the rest of Europe, Tacitus was taken up as an authority by both monarchists and republicans alike. Milton praised him as the 'greatest enemy to

²⁶See Bodin, *Of the Lawes and Customes of Common-wealth Learnedly Discoursing of the power of sovereignty and majestacy*, trans. Richard Cholles (London, 1606), I.I, p. 3.

²⁷Ibid., V.V, p. 891.

²⁸Given that Botero was a cleric, and writing presumably for Catholic princes, it is not unlikely that to avoid censure he adopted similar tactics to Toland and earlier unorthodox authors, cloaking his advocacy of Tacitus with criticism.

²⁹See Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of State*, trans. P. J. and D.P. Waley (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), pp. xiii, xiv.

³⁰Ibid., p. 3.

Tyrants' yet he was also invoked by James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, and throughout the period 1610-60 he was commonly cited in the debates between monarchists and their opponents.³² Whilst on the continent his reputation suffered somewhat in the seventeenth century from the blow inflicted on it by Botero, Englishmen continued to regard him with admiration and views of him seem to have been coloured more by commentators such as Lipsius, Bodin, Boccalini and Malvezzi.³³

To a considerable extent Trenchard and Gordon's reading of Tacitus was similar to that of the Netherlander Justus Lipsius. They too found in him a pragmatic approach to politics, based on a realistic appraisal of human nature, and a non-dogmatic and tolerant stance towards religion which struck a chord with their own views. It is likely that Gordon, if not Trenchard also, had read Lipsius. He was famed throughout most of Europe as an authority on Tacitus and his *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine* had been available in an English translation from 1594. Gordon certainly implied that he knew Lipsius' writings - he mentioned the Dutch author in the review of previous commentators and translators in the prefatory discourses to his own translation of Tacitus' works.³⁴

In addition to playing a leading role in reviving interest in Tacitus by republishing his works in the 1570s, Lipsius gained a wider audience for the historian's lessons

³¹Ibid., pp. 47, 111, 112.

³²See K.C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 161-5.

³³Schellhase has observed that the possible influence of Tacitus on Englishmen via Boccalini, Lipsius and other continental writers has not been analysed. It should become clear however, in the course of this chapter, that in the case of Gordon there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that his reading of Tacitus may have owed much to Boccalini.

in political realism through his own *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine*. The text, which its English translator claimed 'containeth matter of pollicie, and especially concerneth the establishment of Principalitie', draws heavily on Tacitus and offers advice to kings and princes. Observing that it had long been in doubt which form of government Tacitus favoured, and that he had never explicitly endorsed any one, Lipsius noted the historian's dismissal of a commonwealth composed of all three forms before declaring himself in favour of principalities, which he inferred was also the opinion of Tacitus. Echoing Tacitus, he dismissed government by the many out of hand as breeding anarchy, the people being fickle, cowardly, lacking in reason and commitment to the public good and incapable of preserving liberty. However, Lipsius did not commend all principalities, only those which were lawful, that is '*the government of one, imposed according to custome, and lawes, undertaken, and executed for the good of the subjects.*'³⁵ Lipsius also proved himself a Tacitist in combining a sceptical view of religion with an appreciation of its social utility. Although he paid lip service to Christianity, he undermined the idea of true religion by suggesting that men adhered to the faith they were born into more out of habit than as a result of a reasoned choice and a search for truth. Because of the misery experienced by Europe as a result of its religious wars, he believed that only one faith should be observed in a state. However, should men differ from the state religion Lipsius advised princes to show toleration and argued that men who practised their faith in

³⁴See *The Works of Tacitus*, I, p. 8.

³⁵Justus Lipsius, *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine*, trans. William Jons (London, 1594), p. 19.

private should never be punished.³⁶ Like Tacitus he was also highly critical of superstition, regarding it as the means by which the clergy enriched and empowered themselves at the expense of the laity and with the connivance of the great, who knew that superstition exerted the greatest force in governing the multitude.

Alluding to Machiavelli, Lipsius criticised those who counselled princes that it was permissible to break oaths and act dishonestly in order to gain the upper hand. However, the denunciation would seem merely defensive because later in the text he goes on to advise precisely such a course. Distinguishing between three types of deceit – light, middle and great – he discussed each one and proceeded to allow a prince recourse to all three. A form of light deceit such as dissimulation, although morally reprehensible in ordinary terms, was most necessary to a prince, he argued: ‘I advouch it ought not to bee amongst privat persons, but in a state I utterly denie it. They shall never governe well, who know not how to cover well, *and those to whom the charge of a commonwealth is committed.*’³⁷ So too, he insisted, middle deceits, such as winning men over by bribery, ought to be tolerated: ‘And as in the application of medicines, they do with approbation, mingle venomous drugs for the good of the patient, so *these things* do seeme *profitable as it were a medicine.*’³⁸ Citing St. Augustine, he argued there were some lies which carried no great offence yet were not without fault, although he inferred the fault was for God and not man

³⁶ Lipsius himself, although born a Catholic, changed his faith to conform with his place of residence and the religion established there by law. In Germany he turned Lutheran, in Louvain a Catholic again and in Leyden a Calvinist, before returning to the fold to die a Catholic.

³⁷ *Six Bookes of Politickes*, p. 117.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

to judge.³⁹ Among these ‘inoffensive lies’ Lipsius counted great deceits such as treachery, as in the breaching of oaths, and injustice. Like Tacitus, he suggested it was ridiculous to expect that justice should always be done and that all individuals should receive their due. Different, more fluid, standards applied to the direction of a state than to the direction of a man’s private life. Ultimately the end, the good of the state, justified the means, making right and wrong relative terms, so that Lipsius was able to observe that ‘A happie and prosperous mischiefe is called vertue.’ The only absolute imperative was that the state should continue in being and that it should thrive, allowing a ruler wide licence: ‘the Prince in desperate matters, *should alwaies follow that which were most necessarie to be effected, not that which is honest in speech ... For necessitie which is the true defender of the weakenesse of man, doth breake all lawes.*’⁴⁰ Where licence overstepped its bounds and princes acted in their own interests rather than those of the state, Lipsius followed Tacitus in advising forbearance in the hope of better times:

*For while there are men, there be vices: neither yet doth this last alwaies, and recompence is made by the change of those that are better. Wherefore I conclude, the disposition of kings is to be borne withall, neither are often changes profitable.*⁴¹

Lipsius’ countrymen, the Dutch republican de la Court brothers were also admirers of Tacitus and were read by Gordon and, probably, Trenchard. In their work the de la Courts drew on Tacitus directly and indirectly, via the German jurist and Tacitist Clapmarius, who reworked the ‘good’ reason of state of Italian theorists into a ‘*ius*

³⁹Montaigne too argued the laws of justice cannot subsist without some admixture of injustice and approvingly quoted Tacitus’ view that every case of exemplary punishment is unfair to individuals but that is counterbalanced by the public good. See *Essays*, II.20, p. 766.

⁴⁰*Six Bookes of Politickes*, p. 123.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 202.

dominationis'.⁴² In the opinion of Clapmarius, this right allowed a government to violate the established law when confronted by a crisis that threatened the general interest. Like Clapmarius, the de la Courts enumerated a series of circumstances which they believed gave rise to the exercise of such right, on the basis that 'nothing ought to be allow'd to be politickly Good or Bad, but what conduces to the Advantage, or tends to the Oppression of the whole Community, that is, of the most part of the Inhabitants of the State.'⁴³ It should be remembered that both the de la Courts and Trenchard and Gordon used reason of state rationale to support their call for religious and commercial freedom, arguing that these were the twin pillars of a nation's wealth and greatness.⁴⁴

Another commentator on Tacitus and proponent of *ragion di stato*, whom Gordon in particular would seem to echo and cited with approval, is the Italian political theorist Boccalini.⁴⁵ They both might be described as pink Tacitists, a term coined by Toffanin to distinguish a supplementary category of men who were neither red Tacitists nor black Tacitists but who were supporters of limited monarchy in an era of absolutism.⁴⁶ Even if a republican, it is clear that Boccalini had no time for a

⁴²See Haitsma Mulier, *The Myth of Venice and Dutch Republican Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 121-2.

⁴³*Fables, Moral and Political*, I, p. 81.

⁴⁴See *The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick of Holland and West-Friesland*, pp. 65-6, 70-76, 81, 87-92, 388.

⁴⁵Gordon was somewhat less warm in his estimation of Boccalini when, in seeking to recommend the superior merits of his own commentary and translation of Tacitus, he gave his predecessors' efforts, including those of the Italian writer, short-shift.

⁴⁶See Peter Burke, 'Tacitus', ed. T.J.A. Dorey, *Tacitus* (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 149-71. The apparent difficulty in categorising Boccalini's political beliefs would seem to arise from his refusal in *Advertisements from Parnassus* to identify himself consistently with one voice and from his heavy use of irony, an opaqueness he shared, of course, with his political master, Tacitus. In the case of Apollo, who presides over the Court of Parnassus, the god sometimes appears to speak for Boccalini and at others he could be said either to play the part of devil's advocate or else to argue, in seeming good faith, on the side of monarchy and royal prerogative,

pure democracy, viewing the people as a dangerous force capable of destroying the state. His sympathies seem to have lain with the form of government enjoyed by Venice, an aristocratic republic and the model that is praised repeatedly in his *Advertisements from Parnassus*.⁴⁷ For Boccalini, like many so called 'republicans' from Tacitus to Trenchard and Gordon and beyond, the people occupied an ambiguous position, they were both victim, the subject of anti-absolutist rhetoric, and villain, in the form of the ever-present spectre of mob rule.⁴⁸ Like Tacitus, Boccalini believed that it was a feature of human nature to be corrupted by power and the people were no less impervious to its influence than great men. To safeguard the commonwealth, therefore, from a dangerous imbalance and abuse of power he sought to educate both governors and governed in Tacitus' lessons of state.⁴⁹ The ancient writer, Boccalini explained, had through his *Annals* and *Histories* fashioned for the people 'politick spectacles' which allowed them to penetrate the outward show of statesmen and discover their secret motives and guiding passions. Dismissing the accusation levelled by Tacitus' critics, that the historian's intention was to provide governors with a pattern to enable them to establish a tyrannical form of government, Boccalini insisted that Tacitus taught rulers that it was sound policy to make the well-being of the state their prime concern and 'to let the Senators of Commonwealths see, into what deplorable

thereby perhaps embodying Boccalini's moral that all monarchs, however enlightened, are driven by the desire for power.

⁴⁷Boccalini leaves his readers in no doubt, however, that he did not favour hereditary aristocracies. It is also clear that he did not believe the Venetian form of government could be easily, if at all, replicated. See Trajano Boccalini, *Advertisements from Parnassus*, trans. Henry, Earl of Monmouth (London, 1656), pp. 141, 208.

⁴⁸Gordon, for example, could when occasion demanded play with the age-old contrast between 'populus', those with a political voice, and 'vulgus', the crowd or mob.

⁴⁹Boccalini even ironically portrayed his fictionalised Tacitus succumbing to the corrosive affect of power. Invited to be prince of Lesbos Tacitus, Boccalini writes, began with the design of serving the people but ended by governing tyrannically, finding his resolutions 'grub'd up and eradicated by the curbed power of Rule', *Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 50.

calamities they run, when preferring the hatred of their privat[e] passions, and their own self-interests before the publick good'.⁵⁰

A traditional analogy for the relationship between governors and governed, that of shepherds and their flocks, was much favoured by Boccalini – it appears frequently in the *Advertisements from Parnassus* - and used to ironic effect it seems to reflect his less than exalted view of political society. The people, like sheep, he suggested, were too stupid and blinkered to govern themselves and those who governed them frequently shared those faults, failing to understand, like bad shepherds, that a well-tended population was less troublesome and more productive than one that was ill-treated. Boccalini thus acknowledged that the people needed rulers to direct them. However, he distinguished between those rulers who used moderation and those who ruled arbitrarily. Like good shepherds, the former applied to their flock 'the shears of discretion, instead of those of meer interest.' They were careful when shearing their sheep to 'not onely not slea them, but not so much as touch a bit of their skin'.⁵¹ In one 'Advertisement' a shepherd advises the lady Roman Monarchy: 'That Princes should be happy if they used the same charity in governing their subjects, as Shepherds do in feeding their flocks, and the people most happy if they would imitate sheep in their obedience to their Princes.'⁵² Elsewhere the same observation is attributed to the Venetian political theorist Paolo Paruta, accompanied by the argument that God taught princes to allow subjects to increase in wealth and to keep them compliant because poverty bred desperation. Learning from this lesson, 'the ancient Romans, who were true

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 249.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 211.

masters of the reason of state, found no better means to make the warlike French, whom they had newly conquered, quiet and obedient to their Republike, then by affording them all possible means of growing rich'.⁵³ Deaf to this advice, however, were those bad shepherds who looked only to immediate profit from their flock. They were necessarily outraged by the teaching of Machiavelli, whom Boccalini has the judges of his fictitious state of Parnassus arraign on a charge of arming sheep against their shepherds, of providing sheep with 'breast-plates and gauntlets, when they [shepherds/governors] would milk or shear their sheep ... and that it was impossible so great numbers of them should be governed by one only shepherd, unless they were totally deprived of horns, teeth, and will.'⁵⁴

Boccalini would have the people equipped with the necessary means to protect themselves from arbitrary rulers and to form a check on a power which, if unrestrained, would grow to know no bounds. He would not, however, see the people possessed of any real political power or role in government. To be forewarned was to be fore-armed and Tacitus and Machiavelli, he held, armed men with knowledge of the hidden motives of rulers and the true, corrosive nature of power and cautioned them against being so trusting as to be led like sheep to the slaughter. They need not follow, sheep-like, a bad shepherd but could demand to be treated like men and not as dumb beasts. They could ensure princes realised that if they used men as brute animals they in turn might make use of their brute strength and follow the example of those 'skittish Mules, who have driven their

⁵²Ibid., p. 94.

⁵³Ibid., p. 131.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 176.

indiscrete Shepherd out of the fold with a kicking'.⁵⁵ Boccalini relates the tale of Aupuleius' golden ass, who received a severe beating from his master after delivering him a seemingly unprovoked kick that left Aupuleius almost for dead. The ass later explained to his groom that in kicking his master he had acted with premeditation, to teach Aupuleius to treat him with greater respect and thereby escape, at the price of one beating, a thousand such blows in a year. The moral is clear, the people should administer a similar lesson to masters such as Aupuleius, 'who delights to dominier over such as I am', for this is the way 'to make them wiser. And wo unto him who living in all submissiveness with an humorous master, hath not heart enough so to resent himself once a year, as may turn injuries into better observances'.⁵⁶

For Boccalini, the political role of the people was limited to its ability to act as a deterrent force against tyranny, in exerting a counterbalance to absolute power through the threat to rulers that they could be unseated if they chose to govern arbitrarily. Yet he feared that this threat could be levelled at good governors as well as bad, since he believed the people to lack judgement and the wisdom to know that to be well governed was not to be permitted complete licence. Gordon at times exhibited a similar lack of confidence in the people's powers of discrimination. At the height of the South Sea scandal he and Trenchard lauded the nation's ability to judge the government, on the basis of its handling of the affair, and Gordon argued 'Every ploughman knows a good government from a bad one,

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 211-2.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 385.

from the effects of it'.⁵⁷ Yet when the Atterbury plot was discovered the people were berated for failing to grasp that extraordinary measures were needed to meet an extraordinary danger.⁵⁸

The form of government that came closest to Boccalini's ideal was an elective aristocratic republic, as exemplified by Venice, which he believed represented true government by the best. Those who had a hand in the government of Venice, he argued, had been bred up to value honour above personal aggrandisement and they therefore did not seek to enlarge their power, either at the expense of those they governed with or those they governed. The people in turn were content to play no part in government, knowing themselves well governed and possessed of as much individual liberty as was consistent with the liberty of the state. However Boccalini did not believe this, the best form of government possible, was best for all states. In an age of absolute monarchy, where power was everywhere abused, all power became a matter of contention and suspicion. In nations accustomed to monarchy, therefore, it was almost impossible to establish a lasting aristocratic republic, since the people lacked the habit of voluntary obedience and the nobility were in want of the virtue necessary to maintain a republic such as Venice.

Boccalini's perspective is illustrated by his tale of the island of Mitilene. On the death without issue of their prince, the people of the state debated whether to choose a new ruler or instead to set up as a free country. One of the chief citizens,

⁵⁷*CL*, I, no. 38, p. 267.

⁵⁸See for example *CL*, II, no. 134, p. 926: 'It is surprising what minute and contemptible causes create discontents, disorders, violence, and revolutions amongst men; what a small spring can

who would seem to be Boccalini's mouthpiece, argued that those habituated to servitude were incapable of being free and that liberty only flourished where it was a native growth and it was fruitless therefore, if not dangerous, to attempt to transplant it to a foreign soil. In countries inured to monarchy 'the ambition of the Nobility' and 'the sedition of the common people' were 'capital enemies to living free' and strangled liberty, supplanting it with division and disorder.⁵⁹ Examples of free states were irrelevant since their circumstances differed from those of Mitilene and although, he argued, it must be conceded princes were sometimes insolent, 'very beasts', yet 'there is not a more phantastical, insolent, or bestial Government, in the world, then that of an ill-ordered Commonwealth, of a free tumultuous State.'⁶⁰ Disregarding the advice of Boccalini's chief citizen, however, the people of Mitilene sent to Venice for a copy of its laws. Yet when this code arrived the common people were dissatisfied with it, because it excluded them from government, and the nobility were equally displeased, since it prevented them from buying places and allowed censors the authority to examine strictly into every man's behaviour and, consequently, all cried out for monarchy. Trenchard and Gordon, like most radical as well as establishment Whigs in the early eighteenth century, came to the same conclusion about Britain. They believed its people were incapable of supporting a republic on the classical model and that in the circumstances a limited monarchy was the only alternative to tyranny or anarchy.⁶¹

Drawing directly on Tacitus, Trenchard argued:

actuate a mighty and many-headed multitude; and what mighty numbers one man is capable of drawing into his disgusts and designs.'

⁵⁹*Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 79.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶¹Toland, one such 'radical', writing to Harley in December 1711, noted that although the minister had encouraged him to produce a new edition of Harrington's *Oceana* 'neither of us imagined the model of it self to be practicable.', *Miscellaneous Works*, II, p. 227.

Tacitus observed of the Romans in his time *Nec totam libertatem nec totam servitutem pati posse*; That they could neither bear full liberty, nor perfect slavery. This is certainly the case of England at present, if by liberty be understood what I presume he meant by it, a republican form of government. But I conceive that liberty may be better preserved by a well poised monarchy, than by any popular government that I know now in the world, whatever forms may exist in imagination. However, whether this be true or not, it is certainly true that no man in his wits will lose the benefit of a very good present establishment, and run infinite hazards, to try to get one a little better, if he could have any prospect of attaining it: And I shall endeavour to shew, that the effecting such a project is impossible; and that during the present distribution of property, we can preserve liberty by no other establishment than what we have; and in the attempt to alter it, must run great hazard of losing what we are in possession of, or perhaps of falling into an absolute monarchy ...⁶²

Gordon, like Trenchard, understood that modern men did not possess, and were not capable of acquiring, the virtue which was a prerequisite for liberty in its ancient form. Uncoupled from virtue liberty was dangerous, descending into licence, and in the present day laws and institutional structures had to supply this want of virtue if the liberties held to be fundamental by society were to be safeguarded. In tune with both Tacitus and Boccalini, Gordon argued: 'It is with Liberty, as 'tis with Power. It is always unsafe when it is excessive ... Unbounded Liberty is as dangerous as unbounded Power; dangerous to the People, as well as to the Prince; and there is as much an End of Liberty when the People can do what they please as when the Prince can.'⁶³

Echoing Tacitus, Boccalini suggested that the best that could be hoped for in an age of absolute monarchy, when men were incapable of supporting liberty, was that

⁶²CL, II, no. 85, p. 613-14.

⁶³Thomas Gordon, *A Collection of Papers All Written, some of them published, During the Late Rebellion* (London, 1758), no. 39, pp. 14-5. Boccalini concluded his tale of Mitilene with the ironic advice that 'if any one would set up Liberty in *Mitilene*, let them burn all Laws and Statutes, for such [men] understood that to be perfect Liberty, where none obeyed, all commanded, and every one did what he list.', *Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 82.

monarchs should govern with moderation and not arbitrarily. It was proper that they, like good shepherds, should use their subjects but not that they should abuse them. It was right, but also politic as Tacitus had shown, that monarchs should attend to the interests of their people because in this way they forwarded their own interests. Trenchard and Gordon sought throughout their careers to convince Whig ministers of the truth of this advice. Gordon warned those in power that to sacrifice public interest to private interest was 'poor Policy, and a narrow View, as well as very wicked'. Trenchard concurred, insistently declaring: 'How much it is the Interest of Governors to use the Governed well'.⁶⁴

Again following Tacitus, Boccalini argued that subjects in turn, when well governed, were best advised to obey their masters and accept in them those faults or vices which were common to all but the most virtuous of men. It is, of course, an argument that both Trenchard and Gordon employed in defence of Whig ministers under attack from Tory critics:

It is better to bear some Inconveniences, and even very palpable Faults, then to introduce worse, by endeavouring to remove them. Most Reformations as certainly imply future Danger as they infer present Defects and Depravity. Whoever has Power to mend a State, hath Power to hurt it, and may do so without designing it. The Populace, particularly, are very insufficient, very rash Reformers; nor can any State be steady or tolerable, where the Populace can sway the State: For, besides their own rapid and incompetent judgment, they are eternally liable to be charmed, and roused, and seduced, by some dangerous and selfish Prompter.⁶⁵

⁶⁴*The Works of Sallust*, p. 40; Trenchard, *CL*, II, no. 97, p. 693.

⁶⁵*The Works of Sallust*, p. 167; also see p. 94. Gordon later contends: 'I would rather see many Abuses subsist, then a *Cromwell*, a *Pisistratus*, a *Cesar*, or (if you will), a *Gracchus*, assuming lawless power to redress them', p. 79. See also *The Humourist*, II, p. 148; *Pasquin*, LXXIV, 18 October 1723. For Trenchard's views, see 'Seasonable Advice to the Electors of Great Britain', *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard, Esq. And Thomas Gordon, Esq.*, II, pp. 274-5.

Similarly, Boccalini argued, rulers were foolish, and courted danger, if they imagined they could effect a reformation in manners in a people who had long been strangers to virtue. Men who had become habituated to their vices were not likely to brook any check on them. Boccalini has Solon repeat Tacitus' dictum that 'when vice and corruption hath got deep rooting, it is wiselier done to tolerate the evil, then to go about to remedy it out of time, with danger to worse inconveniences'.⁶⁶ He then himself observes, quoting Tacitus, that wise men know 'As long as there be men, there will be vices' and 'That men live on earth, Though not well, yet as little ill as they may; and that the height of human wisdom lay in being so discreet as to be content to leave the world as they found it'.⁶⁷ Undoubtedly Trenchard and Gordon shared the same dark view of human nature as that held by Tacitus and Boccalini and indeed Gordon's cautious counsel is reminiscent of the form of words used by Boccalini. Men, he advised, should 'take the World in the main just as he finds it, excepting only in cases of extreme Necessity, where the Oppression is notorious and universal'.⁶⁸

Knowing both from their study of Tacitus and from their own observation of human nature that it was impossible, and potentially perilous, to seek to eradicate vice, Trenchard and particularly Gordon had, like Boccalini, little patience with the efforts of reformers. Besides doubting their motives, they believed reformers misdirected their zeal and aimed at easy targets, condemning lesser criminals whilst remaining silent on the gross crimes and abuses of power committed by

⁶⁶ *Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 157.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162; for Tacitus, see *Histories*, 4.

⁶⁸ *Pasquin*, LVI, 13 August 1723. See also *CL*, II, nos. 70 and 90 pp. 504, 643.

absolute princes, whose ambitions and greed were boundless.⁶⁹ Boccalini and the authors of *Cato's Letters* believed it was better to suffer governors who were no less corrupt than those they governed, rather than by opposing the government, and thus weakening it, allow in a foreign power in comparison with which former governors would appear as veritable paragons of virtue. At all costs absolute monarchy had to be excluded and, they held, almost inevitably this meant accepting limited monarchy. For Boccalini, the only alternative to the absolutism of France and Spain, and in Trenchard and Gordon's eyes the only alternative to the Jacobite Pretender, was the constitutional rule enjoyed by nations such as England, the Low Countries, Germany and Poland, whose people, in Boccalini's words, 'were born to a kind of Liberty, and who might be said to be sheep, which giving their shepherds a little milk by way of recognition or Fealty, in a certain little mark'd measure. And who will not suffer themselves (as is usual elsewhere) to be milked at discretion.'⁷⁰

In their condemnation of empire-building and military expansionism, Boccalini and Trenchard and Gordon were at variance with Tacitus. The only empire deserving of praise in their view was a commercial one, as a flourishing trade, they argued, was incompatible with absolute rule. The interests of a commercial people, ambitious of wealth, were opposed to those of an absolute prince, ambitious of power and glory.⁷¹ Because commerce allowed men to grow rich it made them desirous of peace and greater profit, rather than war and military honours. Also, the same

⁶⁹ *Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 155.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 323. None of these states, of course, was a republic. Two were actual monarchies and the other two, in the office of stadholder and elector, resembled monarchies.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 293-4.

desire for the untroubled enjoyment of their wealth made them unlikely to disturb the peace with such seditious actions as would topple the state into either the anarchy of pure democracy or the tyranny of absolute rule. In arguing thus, Boccalini, like Trenchard and Gordon, recognised that in the modern age a republic based on virtue was an utopian dream. Instead they believed that in the absence of virtue self-interest, rightly directed, was the only sure foundation of a free state. They realised that self-interest, channelled through commerce, could fulfil in the modern world the same role as virtue had in the ancient, the defence and preservation of liberty.

In the direction of a state both Boccalini and Gordon, and to a lesser extent Trenchard, followed Tacitus in believing governors were justified, and indeed duty-bound, to use subterfuge and unorthodox means where the end aimed at was the public good. At bottom they believed, as Gordon's emphatic assertion indicates, 'whatever is necessary to the Publick Safety is just.'⁷² Although both authors accepted the conventional condemnation of *raison d'etat* they believed it was too useful a weapon to discard in defence of the commonwealth, especially since it featured in the armoury of most arbitrary princes. Boccalini thus portrayed the literatti of Parnassus agreeing unanimously, after long disputation on whether Tacitus was fit company for men such as they, who abhorred tyranny, 'that the familiar acquaintance of so politick, and so wise a Writer, was more requisite for

⁷²*Pasquin*, XVI, 11 March 1722. As already noted, in the wake of the Atterbury plot, Trenchard excused standing armies, suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and pensions as necessary evils, provoked by conspiracies. Similarly, although he inveighed against corruption in elections he also excused it in cases where a 'man of virtue' uses it in 'self-defence' against a candidate who employed corruption to beat him. See 'On Elections', pp. 52-3.

Commonwealths, than for Monarchies'.⁷³ Boccalini and Gordon, therefore, distinguished between *raison d'état* stratagems employed by arbitrary rulers, in furtherance of their private interests, and the use of the same devices by governors in defence of their people's liberties, the latter being the true reason of state just as the former was false. That, seemingly paradoxically, some of these devices were practised secretly and without the people's knowledge was a necessary consequence of the commonality of man's inability to see beyond his own immediate and selfish interests. Not, of course, that either Boccalini or Gordon believed governors were any less devoted to their own selfish interests, merely that being more practised in the art of statecraft they might with greater ease be brought to understand that their private interests were tied to those of the public. Indeed, ostensibly both authors wrote with this aim in mind.

Too much openness left a state vulnerable to the ambitions of other states that played a closer game, as Boccalini illustrated by having the Lady of Venetian Liberty reveal as the key to her longevity that 'secrecy is no less necessary for the well governing of States, than good counsel.'⁷⁴ Gordon agreed on the need for secrecy, that is, if it served to protect the nation's liberty rather than merely the liberty of criminally corrupt ministers and Court favourites. He employed this reason of state rationale in his defence of Walpole's allegedly unconstitutional response to Jacobite intrigue. When an apparently grave threat to liberty arose in the form of the Atterbury plot, Gordon told his readers that men should not enquire into the secrets of government and that all truths, both philosophical and religious

⁷³*Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 249.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 14.

as well as political were not fit to be told, or told only to those capable of free and independent thought.⁷⁵ Secrecy in government was therefore warranted when it shielded the nation from its enemies.

This two tier conception of knowledge is also apparent in John Toland's emphasis on the division, in philosophical understanding, between the penetrating knowledge available to the few and the superficial form grasped by the many, in his distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric. Not that Toland endorsed the strategy of reason of state, despite carrying out secret missions on behalf of Robert Harley and soliciting for further such employment. He spoke disparagingly of those who justified, on the grounds of expediency, allowing the people to believe falsehoods and shared the 'republican martyr' Algernon Sidney's view of reason of state as a practice damned by association with absolute monarchy. This difference in perspective between 'commonwealthmen' such as Sidney and Toland on the one hand and Gordon on the other would seem, in part at least, to reflect differing degrees of confidence in the idea that governors could themselves be governed in their actions by reason and virtue, rather than by self-interest. Indeed it could be argued that in his conception of the function of virtue in civil society, Sidney conforms more closely to the role Pocock ascribes to Harrington in the civic humanism paradigm than does the author of *Oceana*. Whereas Harrington looked to structural institutions rather than virtue as a bar to the abuse of power, for Sidney morality was an important feature of his political thought.⁷⁶ Unlike

⁷⁵Gordon insisted: 'Secrets of State ought not to be published to the vulgar', *St. James' Journal*, 30 March 1723. See also *The Humourist*, p. 159.

⁷⁶Harrington, like Gordon, viewed *raison d'état* as a necessary weapon in the battle against tyranny. Reason of state in democracy and in the domestic context, he argued, 'consists not of any more than

Harrington, he was not greatly impressed by Venice, with its system of political checks and balances, because he placed his faith in a government guided by a virtuous 'natural aristocracy', effectively the descendants of England's old feudal or 'Gothic' nobility. It followed, in Sidney's analysis, that good governors had no need to resort to reason of state stratagems, since their reason and virtue enabled them to create order out of the competing interests of a diverse mankind.⁷⁷ For him this was the true 'science of policy' and not that 'wicked malicious craft, exercised with perfidy and cruelty, accompanied with all manner of lust and vice, directly and irreconcilably contrary to virtue and piety, honesty or humanity, which is taught by Machiavelli and others.'⁷⁸

Sidney was well versed in the language of 'interest' that became widespread in the political discourse of seventeenth century western Europe.⁷⁹ His own doctrine, although it took as its starting point an acceptance of the mechanical laws of classic French interest theory, denied an identity of interest between absolute monarchy and the people. Instead he insisted there existed an irreconcilable contrariety of interest between the two. In his *Court Maxims*, which takes the form of a dialogue between the 'commonwealthman' Eunomius and the 'Courtier and lover of state truth' Philalethes, Sidney presented the case that it served a prince's interests to keep his people low and in poverty.⁸⁰ As already shown, Gordon took a contrary view, despite his admiration for 'the great Algernon Sidney'. When in *Cato's*

giving such a stop in accumulation that the State comes not to be Monarchical.', *Oceana*, p. 513. Gordon would, however, have defined it as a defence against 'absolute' monarchy.

⁷⁷Algernon Sidney, *Court Maxims*, ed. H.W. Blom, E. Haitsma Mulier, R. Janse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 23.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁹See Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic 1623-77* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 208-9.

Letters Gordon quoted extensively from Sidney's *Discourses* he did so in order to attack abuses of government power and the South Sea scandal.⁸¹ In that context Sidney's moralistic rhetoric was useful. However, Gordon's commitment to the sentiments expressed in these sections is undercut by his more pragmatic stance elsewhere in the *Letters* and in his other writings. Because Gordon believed most, if not all, men incapable of true virtue he was content to sanction the practice of reason of state, as long as it served the interest of the commonwealth rather than an absolute ruler or a corrupt Court. He was therefore able, on the one hand, to condemn Walpole's cover-up of the South Sea scandal, which allowed prominent figures close to Court to escape prosecution whilst making vast profits at the public's expense, and later, on the other hand, to support Walpole's constitutionally suspect methods of dealing with the Atterbury plot, in the belief that the conspiracy had posed a danger to the nation's liberty.⁸² However in arguing that the end justifies the means, the essence of *raison d'etat*, neither Gordon nor Boccalini suggested as a corollary that this made the means morally right. Gordon would doubtless have agreed with Boccalini's definition of reason of state as 'a Law useful for Commonwealths, but contrary to the Laws, both of God and Man.'⁸³ Of course this is a view of statecraft that Machiavelli himself subscribed to, although not one Sidney would have countenanced. For Sidney, 'true' reason of state was a policy consistent with Christian morality. Both Trenchard and Gordon differed from his, and from most English republicans of their own day, in following Boccalini's interpretation. Sidney used Tacitus and

⁸⁰See *Court Maxims*, pp. 71-8.

⁸¹See *CL*, I, nos. 25, 26, 27, 37, pp. 179-80, 188-94, 196, 262-6.

⁸²Somewhat ironically, both Sidney and Atterbury were proceeded against by means of Bill of Attainder, a device criticised by some as unconstitutional.

Machiavelli as moral authorities, writers who portrayed the vice of the powerful in order to condemn rather than praise it. Trenchard and Gordon used them instead as authorities on 'policy' but in the same 'republican' cause.

The distinction is an important one. Although Trenchard and Gordon used classical sources that does not make them 'classical republicans'. Instead, their willingness to embrace the doctrine of reason of state marks them out as political pragmatists rather than as proponents of civic virtue.⁸⁴ Because they did not believe that virtue was the necessary prerequisite for the establishment and preservation of liberty they were able to view the two faces of Machiavelli and Tacitus, the republican and the monarchist, with equanimity. They believed that if liberty was to be preserved, in an age when virtue had become an obsolete and inadequate defence, authoritarian means, the monarchist weaponry of reason of state, had to be called into play.⁸⁵ So although undoubtedly Trenchard and Gordon recognised in Machiavelli and Tacitus the face of republicanism, what they saw there and admired was not what others have seen as its classical features but rather its cast of political pragmatism. It was essentially a face they recognised as their own.

⁸³ *Advertisements from Parnassus*, p. 373.

⁸⁴ In contrast, Sidney reveals an ambiguous attitude towards Machiavelli typical of his day. On the one hand, citing him as an authority for the immutable relationship between virtue and liberty and, on the other, condemning him as a master of reason of state. See, for example, Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (Indianapolis: Liberty, 1996), II, p. 135; and *Court Maxims*, III, p. 24. In respect to Tacitus, Sidney employed him purely as a moral or historical source and ignored his justification of imperial rule on the grounds of expediency.

⁸⁵ Trenchard and Gordon never seriously questioned at what point a government's violation of particular liberties, such as Habeas Corpus, under the justification of defence of national liberty undermined or endangered that very liberty.

Chapter VIII

The Reception of *Cato's Letters* in America

Whilst this thesis is not intended primarily as a contribution to the historiographical debate on the ideological origins of the American Revolution, its re-evaluation of the work of Trenchard and Gordon calls into question the validity of the position accorded to *Cato's Letters* by proponents of the civic humanist paradigm in their analysis of the political temper of colonial America. If revisionist historians have misread *Cato's Letters* in their English context it is equally possible that they have misread them in their American context. In a circular logic that has not been questioned, it is taken as a given that Trenchard and Gordon were writers in the classical republican tradition and that *ipso facto* the influence they exerted on the American Revolutionary generation was in that direction. Yet the revisionist school fails to show that Trenchard and Gordon were read as 'ancients' rather than 'moderns' by their American readers, as believers in virtue rather than interest as the means of establishing and preserving liberty.¹ Even those revisionists who concede a liberal strand in Trenchard and Gordon's writings contend that they helped fashion a revolutionary consciousness that was classically republican in its origins.

To various degrees revisionists have emphasised the oppositional element of *Cato's Letters* - the attacks made in the *Letters* on government corruption - at the expense of their strongly libertarian character and have presented them as a pattern for the political mindset that supposedly dominated the Revolutionary and post-

Revolutionary era.² Bernard Bailyn has acknowledged the 'extreme libertarianism' of Trenchard and Gordon, yet although he has placed them in a liberal tradition that viewed liberty in terms of individual, inalienable rights and contract theory of government, he has insisted that only the 'skeleton' of their thought was Lockean.³ However, unlike Pocock and most of his followers, he would seem to allow that for the eighteenth century, if not the twentieth century, the languages of liberalism and civic humanism were not mutually exclusive. But by allying *Cato's Letters* with Bolingbroke's *The Craftsman* as anti-Walpolean opposition writings, Bailyn obscures the fundamental ideological differences between the two. One is criticism from within, from an 'Independent Whig' but a Whig all the same, and the other is opposition from without, on the grounds of party. Indeed, both at the time of their original publication and afterwards, Gordon condemned the partisan use made of *Cato's Letters* by Tory supporters. Moreover, Bailyn's categorisation of Trenchard and Gordon as 'left-wing' is misleading and contributes to the mistaken opinion that they were democrats.⁴

Also mistaken is the view which sees Anti-Federalists, regarded by Progressive historians as radical democrats, as the ideological heirs of Trenchard and Gordon.⁵

¹The labels 'civic humanist' and 'liberal' are of course anachronistic.

²The term 'libertarian' carries different connotations for people of differential political complexions. It is, therefore, used here with some reservations. However, when taken to mean a commitment to individual liberty and limited government it does accurately convey Trenchard and Gordon's political beliefs.

³Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics*, pp. 38-45.

⁴See Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*. Bailyn points out elsewhere that Trenchard and Gordon were radicals not democrats but it is not clear what he means by 'radicals'. See *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 283.

⁵The picture of Anti-Federalists as rustic, democratic levellers opposed by aristocratic merchant-capitalists emerged in the first half of the twentieth century with Progressive historians. Anti-Federalism in this reading is identified as 'agrarian democracy' and Federalism is seen as urban, aristocratic and commercial in character. In the 1950s/60s a consensus view of history began to challenge the Progressive interpretation, arguing that Federalists and Antifederalists shared the same economic interests. For the debate between Progressive and consensus historians see J.H. Hutson,

Jackson Turner Main, who subscribes to the Progressive analysis, has argued that the background to Anti-Federalist ideology is to be found in 'what might be called the left wing of Whiggism' and that *Cato's Letters* was one of two works, the other being Burgh's *Political Disquisitions*, which were of particular relevance to the ideas of Anti-Federalists.⁶ Not only would it appear a gross simplification to talk in terms which suggest a unified Anti-Federalist position that stood opposed to a clearly defined Federalist ideology but it is also incorrect to argue that *Cato's Letters* were the particular intellectual inheritance of the Anti-Federalists. As H.J. Storing has shown, there was no single Anti-Federalist perspective and although there were substantial and well formed differences between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, there were also diverse and contradictory opinions within both camps.⁷ There is also much in contemporary writings to indicate that Trenchard and Gordon's work was equally amenable and serviceable to both Federalists and Anti-Federalists.

When passages or entire numbers of *Cato's Letters* were quoted, or lifted without attribution, in American publications or correspondence before and after Independence, it was frequently in defence of such typically 'liberal' principles as

'Country, Court and Constitution: Antifederalism and the Historians', *William & Mary Quarterly*, 38 (1981), 337-68. It is unhelpful to find the suggestion still current that the Federalists can be read as liberal modernists and the Anti-Federalists as nostalgic communitarians, seeking desperately to hold on to a virtuous moral order threatened by commerce and market society. See the introduction to *The Federalist Papers*, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 54. One need not be a proponent of the consensus perspective to agree with Cecilia M. Kenyon's criticism of the tendency to impose upon the Revolutionary period too simple a pattern of interpretation; to speak of the various parties as if they could be divided naturally into pairs of opposites. See Cecilia M. Kenyon, 'Republicanism and Radicalism in the American Revolution: An Old-Fashioned Interpretation', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 19 (1962), 153-182.

⁶Jackson Turner Main, *The Antifederalists* (Williamsburg: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p.8.

⁷See H.J. Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), I, pp. 5-6.

freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of conscience. Moreover, the revolutionaries' thinking had not been so entirely colonised by 'Country' ideology - which supposedly inspired their minds with visions of conspiracy and corruption - that they could not also invoke self-interest, the traditional refuge of 'Court' apologists, in calling for colonial self-determination. In New York during 1765, letters were published in John Holt's *Gazette*, the principle organ of radical opinion in the period of the Stamp Act, which defended American rights by first appealing to legal precedent and then, secondly, by arguing that these rights were ultimately grounded in self-interest. Echoing *Cato's Letters*, 'Freeman' argued that self-interest was fundamental to human nature and that it was the principle on which government should be judged:

Self Interest is the grand Principle of all Human Actions; it is unreasonable and vain to expect Service from a Man who must act contrary to his own Interests to perform it. No Government therefore can be wise or good, unless the Interests of Individuals is made co-incident with the Interest of the Publick. We may demonstrate this from the divine Oeconomy: We find the Creator has laid intelligent Creatures under such natural laws, that no individual can act contrary to the Interest of the Publick without injuring himself in the same Proportion. And the publick Happiness is then in the most perfect State, when each Individual acts the most agreeably to his own Interest. This ought to be the Model of all Human Government.⁸

The argument was continued in further letters and concluded two months later, in June 1765, with 'Freeman' reasoning that since the interests of Britain and her American colonies could not be made to coincide the connection between them should be severed. In pressing this demand for the right to liberty based on the universal law of self-interest, Trenchard's essay 'Of Plantations and Colonies' was quoted at length, to illustrate that it was natural for a colony to seek independence

from its mother country once it no longer derived any benefit from the relationship. This principle of overriding self-interest informed the frequent and unguarded allusions to independence which appeared in the colonial press in the ensuing months of the Stamp Act crisis. The *New York Journal* celebrated self-interest, or 'self Preservation, self-love' as 'tending in the highest degree to the general Benefit of the Whole and every Part'.⁹ In doing so it endorsed the teaching of *Cato's Letters*, looking to self-interest, rather than self-sacrificing virtue, as the foundation of liberty.

Public virtue, and the sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole, however, is meant to have formed the cornerstone of American political thinking throughout the Revolutionary era, or at least until the Constitution. Revisionist historians, who generally agree on the pre-eminent position occupied by the civic humanist paradigm in the political ideology of eighteenth century America, differ to some degree as to the point at which its dominance began to wane.¹⁰ Yet even early in the century it would appear that many of the ideals which shaped the political thinking of the founding fathers had little to do with

⁸*New York Gazette*, 4 April 1765, quoted in Bernard Friedman's 'The Shaping of the Radical Consciousness in Provincial New York', *The Journal of American History*, 56 (1970), 781-801, at 789-90.

⁹*New York Journal*, 19 March 1767, quoted in 'The Shaping of the Radical Consciousness in Provincial New York', 792.

¹⁰Whereas Gordon Wood argues that the defeat of the Anti-Federalists saw the abandonment of the classical theory of politics, Pocock postpones its demise to some decades later and discovers it still alive and present as the animating force of Jeffersonian Republicanism. Similarly, Lance Banning has argued: 'Most of the inherited structure of eighteenth-century political thought persisted in America for years after 1789. And this persistence was not a matter of a shadowy half-life of fragmentary ideas. A structured universe of classical thought continued to serve as the intellectual medium through which Americans perceived the political world, and an inherited political language was the primary vehicle for the expression of their hopes and discontents.', 'Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution, 1789 to 1793', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (1974), 167-188, at 173. See also Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969) and Pocock, 'Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century'.

classical republican principles and that these ideals, liberal in nature, were popularly transmitted in the work of Trenchard and Gordon.

In July 1722 the young Benjamin Franklin, following the imprisonment of his brother for an article which had not met with the approval of the Massachusetts legislature, reprinted in *The New-England Courant* the fifteenth of *Cato's Letters*, entitled 'Of Freedom of Speech; The same is inseparable from publick Liberty'. It included a stirring defence of freedom of speech and a definition of liberty that is in the tradition of Locke rather than Aristotle:

Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as publick liberty, without freedom of speech: Which is the right of every man, as far as by it he does not hurt and control the right of another ... This sacred privilege is so essential to free government, that the security of property; and the freedom of speech, always go together ...¹¹

Some years later *Cato's Letters* were again marshalled in defense of the same liberties, in what is seen by some as a seminal case in the early development in America of a broad conception of freedom of the press.¹² In 1735 John Peter Zenger was prosecuted by the New York authorities after he had included in his newspaper quotes and entire numbers from *Cato's Letters* on freedom of the press and freedom of speech and on the perils of arbitrary rule. James Alexander, the principal backer of Zenger's *New York Weekly Journal* and 'Cato's principal disciple in the colonies', spearheaded the defence. The main argument used by

¹¹*CL*, I, no. 15, p. 110.

¹²See D.L. Jacobson, ed., *The English Libertarian Heritage*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), p. lii.

Alexander was taken from *Cato's Letters*, that the truth of a defendant's allegedly libellous statement should remove him from fear of punishment.¹³

In the same month that Franklin included a passage from *Cato's Letters* on freedom of speech in his Silence Dogood letters to *The New-England Courant*, in another contribution to the newspaper he again quoted at length that 'ingenious Political Writer in the *London Journal*', from a letter entitled 'Considerations on the Weakness and Inconsistencies of human Nature', which identified self-love as man's strongest passion and the root of all others. Yet, like Trenchard and Gordon, he saw that this tendency, manifested in the desire to purchase and enjoy luxuries, could be a force for good:

I am not sure, that in a great state it [luxury] is capable of a remedy, nor that the evil is in itself always so great as it is represented ... Is not the hope of being one day able to purchase and enjoy luxuries a great spur to labor and industry? May not luxury, therefore, produce more than it consumes, if without such a spur people would be, as they are naturally enough inclined to be, lazy and indolent?¹⁴

As shown by his essay 'A Modest Inquiry into the Nature and Necessity of Paper Currency', he did not see commerce as a threat to virtue and nor was he troubled by the spectre of credit.¹⁵ Over a decade later, when he once again adopted the role of defender of freedom of speech, he looked to a familiar source for inspiration. Writing in support of a Presbyterian minister, Samuel Hemphill, censured by the Commission of the Synod of Philadelphia in April 1735 for propounding 'Unsound

¹³For an account of the Zenger controversy see L.W. Levy, *Legacy of Suppression* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 130.

¹⁴Benjamin Franklin, 'On Luxury, Idleness, and Industry', *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols. (Boston: 1836), II, pp. 448-9.

¹⁵The subject of paper currency is one that illustrates how inadvisable it is to draw close comparisons between English and American 'Court' and 'Country' attitudes in matters of national

and Dangerous' doctrines, he quoted extensively from Gordon's *A Sermon Preached before the Learned Society of Lincoln's Inn* on religious intolerance.¹⁶

Cato's Letters and *The Independent Whig* also figured in a noted controversy between Anglicans and Dissenters in New York in the 1750s over control of a proposed college. William Livingston together with two friends, all of 'independent principles' in politics and in religion, founded *The Independent Reflector*, which soon became embroiled in political and religious disputes and proved a thorn in the side of episcopal Churchmen. *The Independent Reflector* was actively modelled on *The Independent Whig*, its aim being to vindicate 'the civil and religious RIGHTS of my Fellow-Creatures'.¹⁷ It paraphrased many of *The Independent Whig's* arguments and borrowed its tone and language in order to attack tyranny and the ambition and bigotry of the Anglican Church hierarchy and to defend the right to freedom of thought and freedom of expression.¹⁸

Thomas Jefferson was another admirer and so too, despite their political differences, was John Adams. Jefferson's library included copies of *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig* and in his correspondence he praised Gordon's

finance. In America the 'Country' position would have been to be in favour of allowing states to issue their own paper currency and the 'Court' position to be opposed to such a measure.

¹⁶Benjamin Franklin, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), I, pp. 32, 65.

¹⁷William Livingston and Others, *The Independent Reflector*, ed. M.M. Klein (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 56.

¹⁸*The Independent Reflector* praised *The Independent Whig* for having gone 'farther towards shaming Tyranny and Priestcraft (two dismal Fantoms not over-apt to blush) with downright Banter, than could have been effected by austere Dogmas, or formal Deductions. He has often displayed their Deformity with a Sarcasm, and struck Terror into a whole Hierarchy, by raising a single Twitter.', *The Independent Reflector*, p. 345. *Cato's Letters* are also quoted at length on the subject of 'The Vanity of Birth and Titles; with the Absurdity of claiming Respect without Merit', *The Independent Reflector*, p. 365.

translations and commentaries on Sallust and Tacitus.¹⁹ Adams attributed the victory of Oliver Wolcott in the Connecticut gubernatorial election of 1817, in which the campaign issue was 'whether freemen shall be tolerated in the free exercise of their religious and political rights', in part to the recent republication of *The Independent Whig*. 'These Volumes' he wrote 'have produced a Burst of Indignation against Priestcraft Bigotry and Intolerance, and in conjunction with other causes have produced the late Election.'²⁰ The election of Wolcott as governor brought about the Constitutional Convention of 1818, Article VII of which provided for religious freedom. Josiah Quincy, friend and colleague of Adams, in his will bequeathed to his son 'Algernon Sidney's works, John Locke's works, Lord Bacon's works, Gordon's *Tacitus*, and Cato's *Letters*' in the hope that 'the spirit of liberty' might 'rest' on the boy.²¹

Despite the pervasiveness of revisionist received wisdom, the suggestion that *Cato's Letters* forward 'liberal' principles is not an entirely novel one. Prior to the triumph of the revisionist school of thought, which ironically after the consignment of Locke to the role of bit-player saw *Cato's Letters* moved forward to centre stage in the new interpretation of America's Revolutionary ethos, Trenchard and Gordon's work had largely been ignored by scholars of American intellectual history. Caroline Robbins and D.L. Jacobson, writing before *Cato's Letters* became set in stone as a civic humanist text, are notable both for their part in

¹⁹See *The English Libertarian Heritage*, p. lv. References to Adams' appreciation of *Cato's Letters* may be found in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, ed. L.J. Cappon, 2 vols., (Williamsburg: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), II, p. 510; and John Adams, *The Works of John Adams*, 10 vols. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), II, p. 5; X, p. 202.

²⁰*Adams-Jefferson Letters*, II, p. 512.

²¹Josiah Quincy, *Memoirs of Josiah Quincy, Jr.*, quoted in *The English Libertarian Heritage*, p. lviii.

rectifying the neglect shown towards Trenchard and Gordon and also for the emphasis they place on the libertarian aspects of their work. What they fail to recognise, however, is that crucial to any understanding of Trenchard and Gordon's work is their view of human nature. Contrary even to the opinion of most critics of the revisionist perspective, they were not enthusiastic believers in the socially and politically redemptive power of a resurrected civic virtue and it is by no means certain that they imbued the Revolutionary generation with such a zeal. Jacobson's view that they held an 'optimistic view of the mass of mankind' is quite at odds with the dark, Hobbesian image of humanity that appears in *Cato's Letters*.²²

In more recent years a small number of historians have concurred with Jacobson's representation of Trenchard and Gordon.²³ Yet it may be a testament to the weight of authority attributed to the revisionist analysis that even some of its most prominent opponents have tempered their criticism with an acceptance of the now conventional portrayal of Trenchard and Gordon. Issac Kramnick, whilst contesting the validity of the civic humanist paradigm in the context of the late eighteenth century, allows it the field when the debate turns to the early part of the

²²Ibid., p. lviii. One survey of American historiography puts it even more strongly, saying of Trenchard and Gordon: 'They believed that all men were naturally good and that citizens became restless only when oppressed.' R. Shalhope, 'Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism In American Historiography', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 29 (1972), 49-80, at 58.

²³Hamoway, 'Cato's Letters, John Locke and the Republican Paradigm', and McMahon, *The Radical Whigs*, have already been mentioned. Also noteworthy are Steven Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Thomas Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern, Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Rahe, who rejects the 'republican synthesis', provides an impressive analysis of classical republicanism in its original context in order to assess whether the political thought of the American Revolutionary generation was actually classical.

century.²⁴ Even Steven Dworetz and Thomas Pangle, opponents of revisionism who are notable in that they do not side-step the Lockean and especially the Hobbesian strands in Trenchard and Gordon's thought, leave unaddressed the possibility that contemporary readers were no less astute and that the influence *Cato's Letters* exerted on American colonial minds may be seen in an Alexander Hamilton as well as a Thomas Jefferson.²⁵

Another vocal critic of revisionism, Joyce Appleby, has attacked Pocock for his application of a narrow anthropologically based methodology that fails to acknowledge the invariable co-existence of a plurality of discourses within a complex, sophisticated society.²⁶ Her own instructive examination of the competing languages which characterised seventeenth century England has focused on that of the market economy. Economic literature of the period, she argues, set

²⁴See Issac Kramnick, 'Republican Revisionism Revisited', *The American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), 629-664.

²⁵See *The Unvarnished Doctrine* and *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*. Dworetz's otherwise excellent analysis somewhat overstates the extent of Trenchard and Gordon's unmodified adoption of Hobbes. He attempts to undermine Trenchard and Gordon's republican credentials by damning them by association with Hobbes. Yet Dutch, English and, later, British republicans all found a great deal of merit in Hobbes. As argued in chapter 3 of this thesis, while Trenchard and Gordon accepted Hobbes' egoistic psychology the political conclusions they drew from it were closer to the de la Court brothers than they were to the author of *Leviathan*. They, like other republican admirers of Hobbes, accepted the need for a strong sovereign body, whilst at the same time they disagreed with his preferred model of sovereignty. Moreover, it was Hobbes who relieved the subject of all obligation to the sovereign in the event that he ceased to enjoy protection of his person and property. Locke was more circumspect on the question of the circumstances under which a subject could legitimately withdraw his obedience. It is also incorrect to claim, as Dworetz does, that Trenchard and Gordon had a 'conservative dread of change'. They wanted change, a clean-up of government sponsored corruption and changes to legislation that discriminated against Dissenters, but not at the price of peace and security.

²⁶See Joyce Appleby, 'Republicanism and Ideology', *American Quarterly*, 37 (1985), 461-473. Appleby's criticism is a valid one, although her accusation is not strictly accurate. Pocock has conceded the possibility, indeed probability, of the presence of a plurality of languages within a complex plural society. Nevertheless, he has at the same time, not least when more recently revisiting the subject, reinforced the notion of the supremacy of the civic humanist paradigm, see J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (London, Methuen & Co., 1972), chapter 4; and 'Between Gog and Magog: The Republican Thesis and the Ideologia Americana', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48 (1987), 325-46. Moreover, the tolerance Pocock allows in theory to the idea of rival languages is often overlooked by those who have embraced civic humanism as a form of orthodoxy.

out principles for a growth in national wealth which assumed that market relations possessed an order based on the driving forces of human nature and that individual economic freedom furthered consistent commercial development. Whilst it seldom directly addressed political issues this literature presented a model of economic relations, structured on the idea that economic laws were analogous to physical laws, that had profound implications for theories of social order, sovereignty, individual freedom and rights and the relationship between natural and positive law. Transmitted to the American colonies, Appleby argues, this tradition of thought helped foster a competing ideology to that of classical republicanism. It conceived of human nature and the conditions of social stability in quite different terms and articulated a new social reality in which the self-seeking drive appeared more powerful than institutional efforts to mould men's actions.²⁷

However Appleby, following Kramnick, regards Trenchard and Gordon as classical republicans, who rejected material progress because it was not founded on virtue.²⁸

She fails to recognise that on the contrary they, like Mandeville, were in the same tradition as Dudley North, John Houghton, Nicholas Barbon and the other seventeenth century economic commentators she has chosen to champion.²⁹

Trenchard and Gordon were 'moderns' who celebrated material progress and viewed commercial society as a natural development arising out of man's nature as a creature of limitless desires. Gordon could almost be echoing Barbon, or indeed anticipating Smith, when he wrote that man was a creature of insatiable appetites

²⁷See Joyce Appleby, 'The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology', in *Liberals, and Republicanism, in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 161-87.

²⁸Ibid., p. 181.

²⁹It is somewhat surprising that Appleby fails to mention Mandeville at all.

and that the more he acquired the more he wanted.³⁰ Yet far from condemning this trait in man, which meant that he could never feel truly satisfied, Gordon applauded it as a motor for progress, forwarding the course of civilisation:

As soon as men are freed from the importunities of hunger and cold; the thoughts and desire of conveniency, plenty, ornament, and politeness, do presently succeed: and then follow after, in very quick progression, emulation, ambition, profusion, and the love of power: and all these, under proper regulations, contribute, to the happiness, wealth and security of societies.³¹

But Trenchard and Gordon went beyond merely linking psychological drives to productive activities. Unlike Barbon, North and Appleby's other free-marketeers, they were explicitly political writers and, drawing on the epistemological philosophy of Locke, they provided a rationale for individual rights based on man's limited capacity for knowledge. Since, they contended, no man or group of men can be infallible or have a monopoly on the truth, free exercise of the ballot, free speech, freedom of the press and freedom of conscience were all rights that could not, without injustice, be denied. The political ideas which Appleby finds implicit in the economic theory of the seventeenth century free-marketeers, and which she argues helped shape an American liberal ideology, are made explicit in the writings of Trenchard and Gordon. Moreover, Appleby fails to explain how the ideas expressed in the economic literature of seventeenth century England were conveyed to the American colonies of the eighteenth century and gained common

³⁰Here Gordon was, of course, also echoing Hobbes. See chapter 3 of this thesis. Appleby traces a trajectory from seventeenth century economists to Adam Smith. See Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), pp. 25-6.

³¹*CL*, I, no. 67, p. 473. Barbon wrote in similar vein: 'The Wants of the mind are infinite, Men naturally Aspires, and as his mind is elevated, his Senses grow more refined, and more capable of Delight; his Desires are enlarged, and his Wants increase with his Wishes, which is for every thing that is rare, can gratifie his Senses, adorn his body, and promote the Ease, Pleasure, and pomp of Life.' and 'It is not Necessity that causeth the Consumption, Nature may be Satisfied with Little, but

currency. She provides no evidence that North, Houghton and Barbon, or earlier writers such as Mun and Misseldon, influenced the colonists. On the other hand, as already noted, there is ample evidence that *Cato's Letters* were widely read throughout all thirteen colonies and whilst this readership may have been little acquainted with the economic liberalism of Appleby's unsung heroes of seventeenth century England, it would have discovered the same free trade and anti-bullionist arguments forwarded by Trenchard and Gordon and, tied to these, a defence of political liberalism.³² Trenchard even advanced an economic argument drawn from human nature to warn Britain against over-burdening her colonies with taxes and stripping them of their wealth. An argument, as already shown, which was taken by up American revolutionaries. The best policy, he argued, was not to use violence against burgeoning colonies, or to provoke them into setting themselves up as trade rivals, but to 'imitate the example of merchants and shopkeepers' and take them into partnership.³³

The enthusiastic endorsement of open commercial and financial markets one finds in *Cato's Letters* does not square with the revisionist identification of a paradigmatic attitude of ambivalence towards commerce and outright antipathy towards the financial framework which facilitated its growth. However, whilst revisionist historians have proved reluctant to acknowledge those aspects of *Cato's Letters* which suggest an alternative paradigm to that of civic humanism, modern day advocates of free market capitalism and limited government have embraced

it is the wants of the Mind, Fashion, and desire of Novelties, and Things scarce, that causeth Trade.', Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade* (London, 1690), pp. 15, 88.

³²See *CL*, I, no. 64, pp. 442-50, 'Trade and Naval Power the Offspring of Civil Liberty only, and cannot subsist without it'; II, no. 87, pp. 626-37, 'Gold and Silver in a Country to be considered only as Commodities'.

Trenchard and Gordon's 'Cato' as one of their own. The right-leaning, Washington-based Cato Institute, which takes its name from the *Letters*, sees in 'Cato' a standard-bearer of economic liberalism and a defender of the rights of the individual against the encroachments of the state. The Institute's website introduces *Cato's Letters* as a work animated by a 'Jeffersonian philosophy' that 'combines an appreciation for entrepreneurship, the market process, and lower taxes with strict respect for civil liberties and skepticism about the benefits of both the welfare state and foreign military adventurism.'

On the evidence of the *Letters* themselves it is an evaluation which is hard to quarrel with.³⁴ If by 'entrepreneurship' one means commercial activity, Trenchard and Gordon certainly expressed appreciation of its practice and of the market process. Although, while they endorsed free market principles that did not mean they were opposed to government involvement in the regulation of markets. They expected government to prevent the development of monopolies, which harmed trade, and to police the activities of the stock market, to ensure that a favoured few

³³See *CL*, II, no. 106, pp. 747-753.

³⁴It might be argued that Gordon's seeming endorsement of 'an agrarian law, or something like it' situates him firmly in the classical republican tradition. However, Gordon's statement has to be seen in context. This reference appears in a relatively earlier number of *Cato's Letters* (no. 35 of 138), at a time when the full force of Trenchard and Gordon's anger was focused on those implicated in the South Sea Company scandal. Gordon was not advocating a redistribution of wealth when he invoked the idea of an agrarian law but calling for an investigation into the assets of those who by the fraudulent manipulation of South Sea Company shares had acquired wealth of an 'immeasurably or surprising great' magnitude. He claimed: 'I have always thought, that an enquiry into men's fortunes, especially monstrous fortunes raised out of the publick, like Milton's infernal palace, as it were in an instant, was of more importance to a nation, than some other enquiries which I have heard of.' As the letter continues it becomes apparent that Gordon was defending the inviolability of private property not attacking it when he referred to an agrarian law. Those who had unlawfully profited by the South Sea Bubble had despoiled ordinary men of their property. In Gordon's view, they were no less robbers than if they had broken into men's houses and stolen their goods. This is made clear in the closing paragraph of the letter: 'For a conclusion: As the preservation of property is the source of national happiness; whoever violates property, or lessens or endangers it, common sense says, that he is an enemy to his country; and publick spirit says, that he should feel its vengeance.', *ibid.*, I, no. 35, pp. 253-4.

with friends in high places did not profit at the expense of the ruin of a vast number of small investors. Their insistence on the necessity for lower taxes was linked to their demand for the preservation of civil liberties, for men to be allowed the freedom to spend the money they had earned by their labour as they pleased and the freedom to speak and write as they pleased, as long as in doing so no one else's rights were infringed. They would certainly have been extremely sceptical about the benefits of the welfare state, judging by their vehement opposition to charity schools, which was in part based on economic grounds. Equally, their criticism of foreign military excursions was motivated by concern for the national debt. In the Preface to *Cato's Letters* Gordon says of Trenchard that one of the two things he had much at heart was 'the keeping England out of foreign broils', the other being paying off the national debt.³⁵ Much is made by revisionists of the republican obsession with the national debt. Pocock has argued that public credit negatively coloured Tory and Old Whig perceptions of commerce and that it similarly gave rise, in his view, to Hume's ambivalence towards commercial society. Yet, like Hume, Trenchard believed that it was not commerce but war that fuelled the national debt and he was unequivocal in his praise of the former and condemnation of the latter.³⁶

It is perhaps appropriate that 'Cato' should have been adopted as the figurehead of a libertarian think-tank. In a letter on the nature of liberty, Gordon made it plain that the liberty he was extolling was liberty in the negative sense, liberty from

³⁵See *ibid.*, I, pp. 75-6, 79, 130, 157, 445, II, 549, 602, 618-626, 640, 698.

³⁶See *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, pp. 125-41. For Hume's attitude towards public debt see Istvan Hont, 'The rhapsody of public debt: David Hume and voluntary state bankruptcy', in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. N. Phillipson, Q. Skinner (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1993), 321-48.

government interference. Government, he argued, was 'intended to protect men from the injuries of one another, and not to direct them in their own affairs, in which no one is interested but themselves'. A man should be allowed to conduct his own life in his own way, however badly he might fare, as long as he harmed no one but himself. Just because some men might fare very badly was no reason why all men should have restrictions placed on how they lived their lives:

Idiots and lunatics indeed, who cannot take care of themselves, must be taken care of by others: But whilst men have their five senses, I cannot see what the magistrate has to do with actions by which the society cannot be affected; and where he meddles with such, he meddles impertinently or tyrannically. Must the magistrate tie up every man's legs, because some men fall into ditches? Or, must he put out their eyes, because with them they see lying vanities?³⁷

In terms that would gladden the hearts of modern day advocates of free market economics and arms-length government, Gordon railed against the injustice of a man who laboured for his own benefit and that of his family being forced to support those who were idle. Liberty was the freedom to spend one's money in the way one pleased and to pass on to one's children's the gains one had accumulated:

Indeed liberty is the divine source of all human happiness. To possess, in security, the effects of our industry, is the most powerful and reasonable incitement to be industrious: And to be able to provide for our children, and to leave them all that we have, is the best motive to beget them ... The privileges of thinking, saying, and doing what we please, and of growing as rich as we can, without any other restriction, than that by all this we hurt not the publick, nor one another, are the glorious privileges of liberty; and its effects, to live in freedom, plenty, and safety.'³⁸

³⁷CL, I, no. 67, p. 428.

³⁸Ibid., I, no. 63, p. 436. Also: 'By liberty, I understand ... [man's] right to enjoy the fruit of his labour, art, and industry, as far as by it he hurts not the society, or any members of it by taking from any member, or by hindering him from enjoying what he himself enjoys. The fruits of a man's honest industry are the just rewards of it, ascertained to him by natural and eternal equity, as is title to use them in the manner which he thinks fit: And thus, with the above limitations, every man is

Gordon may sound like a nineteenth or twentieth century western liberal but obviously he was no such thing. Neither though was he the economic reactionary and political idealist, and inspiration for American oppositionists, which proponents of the civic humanist paradigm would portray him as.

It is part of the revisionist interpretation of the early national period of American history to present the opposition between Jeffersonian Republicans and Hamilton over the latter's management of the public debt as a replication of the war waged against Walpole's supposed political and financial corruption. Americans at the turn of the century, it is argued, had imbibed the classical republican language of Trenchard and Gordon and other English opposition writers and were therefore cued to recognise key developments, such as a growth in the national debt, as stages in a ministerial conspiracy to subvert the constitution and overthrow republican government. Forrest McDonald has perhaps gone further than most revisionists in claiming that the ideology of Jeffersonian Republicanism was derived largely from the oppositionist tradition of eighteenth century England:

The Jeffersonian Republicans regarded this scheme of things as utterly wicked, even as the English Opposition had regarded Walpole's system. Indeed, though the Jeffersonians borrowed some of their ideas from James Harrington and other seventeenth-century writers and some from John Locke, their ideology was borrowed *in toto* from such Oppositionists as Charles Davenant, John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, James Burgh, and most especially Henry St. John, First Viscount Bolingbroke ... The Republicans adjusted the ideology to fit the circumstances, to fit the U.S. Constitution and the "ministry" of Alexander Hamilton rather than the British Constitution and the ministry of Robert Walpole; but that was all, and astonishingly little adjustment was necessary.³⁹

sole lord and arbiter of his own private actions and property. A character of which no man living can divest him but by usurpation, or his own consent', *ibid.*, I, no. 63, p. 436.

³⁹Forrest McDonald, *The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson* (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1976), p. 19.

McDonald argues that these opposition writers condemned and sought to undo the financial revolution, together with the political corruption it had spawned. In its place they proposed the restoration of an uncorrupted, golden age of English history, when 'life was rural, relationships were personal, the gentry ruled as a natural aristocracy, the main corpus of the citizenry was an honest yeomanry [and] commerce and craft-manufacturing existed only as handmaidens to agriculture'. Jeffersonians, in McDonald's view, were the ideological descendents of these 'reactionaries' who in like fashion resisted the emergence of the modern world.⁴⁰

Lance Banning has criticised Joyce Appleby and Isaac Kramnick for suggesting that revisionists have claimed that Jeffersonianism and English opposition thought were identical, when all they have argued is that a strong influence was exerted by the anti-Walpoleans. He has insisted that McDonald's view is an exceptional one and that it is deliberately provocative. Yet his own writing does little to dispel the false impression that Hamilton's opponents adopted wholesale English opposition ideology and merely rebranded it for domestic consumption:

[I]ntellectually, the Republicans of the 1790s were the "country" party of the United States. Their quarrel with Federalism was much more systematically ideological than has been seen. It rested on a complete and consistent Americanization of English opposition thought.⁴¹

And indeed Pocock has been scarcely less restrained in the parallel he draws between American and English opposition thought, arguing as he has that '[t]o a quite remarkable degree, the great debate on [Hamilton's] policies in the 1790s was a replay of Court-Country debates seventy and a hundred years earlier.'⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 161-2.

⁴¹'Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution, 1789 to 1793', 172-3.

⁴²'Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century', 119-13, 131; also see *Machiavellian Moment*, p. 529. J.M. Murrin has argued in similar vein: 'To an almost incredible degree, American events

Banning's contention is that if some revisionists appear to have pushed the resemblance between English and American opposition thought too far, this has been in order to redress the omissions of previous scholarship. However, even if this is the case, in doing so the pendulum seems to have swung too far in the opposite direction, diminishing the Lockean and liberal elements of Revolutionary and Constitutional era thought. Appleby's analysis would come as a welcome corrective did she not veer too far back to the pre-revisionist position. Banning appears to offer a middle way between revisionist and counter-revisionist interpretations, rightfully dismissing crude all or nothing distinctions between liberal and classical republican positions and allowing both a place in American opposition thought. Yet what then remains is an argument over how big a place each occupied and it is clear that for Banning's communitarian vision of contemporary society it is important that America's classical republican heritage should occupy a central place.⁴³

after 1789 mimicked or even repeated English developments of a century before ... The division between Whig and Tory in Britain closely parallels the split between Federalists and Republicans in the United States, with Hamilton assuming the role of Junto Whigs or Walpole, and Jefferson serving as Tory or 'Country' gentry ... Indeed virtually all of England's central issues reappeared in America once Hamilton and his admirers launched their own financial revolution in the 1790s.', 'The Great Inversion, Or Court Versus Country: A Comparison of the Revolution Settlements in England (1688-1721) and America (1776-1816), in *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Princeton: PUP, 1980), 368-453, at 407.

⁴³Banning contends: 'One of the most important consequences of the modern reinterpretation of Revolutionary republicanism has been the understanding that the Revolutionaries left to their successors a lasting and profound commitment to values and ideas that were not part of a liberal consensus, transmitting to their heirs a more complex political tradition whose rediscovery permits important reinterpretations of American developments and conflicts from the War of 1812 to Watergate.', 'Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the New American Republic', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 43 (1986), 3-19, at 13. In a subsequent essay Banning admits that early advocates of the republican interpretation were 'guilty of incautious language.' The language he now uses himself is more temperate: 'I am seeking to suggest that Revolutionary thought – in 1787 as in 1776 – is best conceived of as an early modern *blend* of liberal and neoclassical ideas, that a coherent mixture of the two traditions was in fact its most distinctive feature.', 'The Republican Interpretation: Retrospect and Prospect', pp. 108-9. Another historian, Daniel T. Rodgers, is wryly amused by such 'concessions to polyglotism' but in his view 'muddle is

It is less clear, however, that it merits such a place. Undoubtedly there is a classical republican dimension to Jeffersonianism but there is perhaps more that is liberal. There is nothing half-hearted in Jefferson's own enthusiasm for commerce and free-trade, as is made plain when in writing to John Adams he declared 'I think all the *world would gain by setting commerce at perfect Liberty*'.⁴⁴ Nor is there anything nostalgic in his attitude to the modern world and developments in science, technology and government. Responding to a letter from Adams, fulsome in its praise of the benefits of modernity, Jefferson seconded his friend's sentiments: 'I agree with you in all it's eulogies on the 18th century. It certainly witnessed the sciences and arts, manners and morals, advanced to a higher degree than the world had ever before seen.'⁴⁵

Banning suggests that the irreducible difference between liberal and republican interpretations of Jeffersonian ideology lies in an understanding of the way in which they related the public and private spheres. American Revolutionaries and Jeffersonian Republicans, he argues, were sufficiently classical in their thought to believe the spirit of individualism to be incompatible with liberty.⁴⁶ Yet Jefferson was under no illusions that men could be expected to surrender their private interests to those of the state. As he wrote to Monroe in 1782: 'This would be

not a satisfactory conclusion.', 'Republicanism: the Career of a Concept', *The Journal of American History*, 79 (1992), 11-38, at 38.

⁴⁴Jefferson to Adams, 31 July 1785, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, p. 7. The same sentiment is expressed in Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* (London, 1882), p. 318: 'Our interest will be to throw open the doors of commerce, and to knock off all its shackles, giving perfect freedom to all persons for the vent of whatever they may chuse to bring into our parts, and asking the same in theirs.'

⁴⁵Jefferson to Adams, 11 January 1816, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, p. 458. Adams had earlier written to Jefferson: 'We may say that the eighteenth century, notwithstanding all its Errors and Vices has been, of all that are past, the most honorable to human Nature. Knowledge and Virtues were increased and diffused, Arts Sciences useful to Men, ameliorating their condition, were improved, more than in any former equal Period.', Adams to Jefferson, 13 November 1815, p. 456.

⁴⁶'Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited', 17-18.

slavery, and not that liberty which the bill of rights has made inviolable, and for the preservation of which our government has been changed.'⁴⁷ While Jefferson's view of mankind was not so dark as that of Trenchard and Gordon he, like they, recognised the limits of human nature. And, like them, he placed his confidence in man's self-interest, rather than his capacity for civic virtue, as the means of securing liberty and the public good. If liberalism implies a belief that men in serving their private, legitimate, interests will at the same time serve the public interest, Jefferson, and indeed Trenchard and Gordon, may be counted liberals. They believed the general good would emerge if the state respected the rights of all and most individuals attended to little else than improving their private lives and voting their self-interest, rightly understood. To consult the public interest a man needed to merely consult his private interest, which meant, after protection of his person, protection of his property:

It is certain, that the whole people, who are the publick, are the best judges whether things go ill or well with the publick. It is true, that they cannot all of them see distant dangers, nor watch the motions, and guess the designs, of neighbouring states: But every cobbler can judge as well as a statesman, whether he can fit peaceably in his stall, whether he is paid for his work, whether the market, where he buys his victuals, be well provided, and whether a dragon, or a parish-officer, comes to him for his taxes, if he pay any.⁴⁸

Trenchard and Gordon did not believe ordinary men were any more capable of virtue than great men, it was rather that they saw them as less able, through lack of opportunity, to give full rein to their ambition and desire for power. This, of course, at first sight sounds very like the Anti-Federalist distrust of 'great men' and their opposition to what they saw as the aristocratic form of government proposed

⁴⁷Quoted in *The Creation of the American Republic*, p. 610.

⁴⁸*CL*, I, no. 13, p. 103.

by the Federalists. Yet Trenchard and Gordon were not anxious to make government any more democratic. Indeed they were frequently disparaging of the 'mob'. The Anti-Federalists may have wanted to devolve greater power to the ordinary man but this was not the aim of Trenchard and Gordon. They were essentially content with the political status quo and wished not to alter the levers of power but to ensure that the few who wielded that power were, by the operation of constitutional checks, prevented from abusing it.⁴⁹ Most Federalists thought as they did.

What Federalists feared was that the majority would tyrannise over the minority and they found this fear reflected in *Cato's Letters*. Anti-Federalists acknowledged the possibility that government based on the will of the majority could result in unjust deprivations of individual liberty, and addressed it in championing a Bill of Rights, but Federalists were particularly exercised by the threat of popular rule prevailing at the expense of minority interests. Trenchard and Gordon, philosophical and religious freethinkers, were alert to the danger of allowing popular opinion, as opposed to the common good, to dominate. It was never their belief that individual interests should be sacrificed to meet the interests of the people, which is said to be the essence of republicanism. To place the public interest before a short-term, immediate, private interest was often a means of securing a long-term, greater, interest for oneself. However, to be forced to 'sacrifice' one's individual interests in the interest of the majority was a form of tyranny:

⁴⁹That is not to say the Anti-Federalists did not want a system of checks and balances but that they believed the form proposed by the Federalists did not address their fears.

It is a mistaken notion in government, that the interest of the majority is only to be consulted, since in society every man has a right to every man's assistance in the enjoyment and defence of his private property; otherwise the greater number may sell the lesser, and divide their estates amongst themselves; and so, instead of a society, where all peaceable men are protected, become a conspiracy of the many against the minority. With as much equity may one man wantonly dispose of all, and violence may be sanctified by mere power.⁵⁰

The tyranny of the majority in matters of religion was particularly objectionable to Trenchard and Gordon. It was the triumph of popular opinion over the common good, which they believed was best served by toleration. Anti-Federalists, while in favour of protection of liberty of conscience, in practice tended to mean toleration of Christian or only Protestant sects.⁵¹ For this reason *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig* would have found a readier audience among Federalists than Anti-Federalists for their impassioned pleas for religious tolerance and calls for repeal of the Test Acts, together with all legislation that discriminated on the grounds of religion. The framers of the Constitution, as suspicious of the ambitions of the clergy as of politicians, rejected the idea of establishing religion as the foundation of civil institutions. Anti-Federalists, on the other hand, were generally more optimistic about the ability of religion to make men less selfish and more public-spirited. They were critical of the Constitution's failure to promote Christian values and of the absence from it of any religious test for office-holding, an omission which appeared intended to further diminish the public significance of religious faith.

⁵⁰CL, I, no. 62, p. 427.

⁵¹See *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, I, p. 23.

To draw parallels between the Federalists and Trenchard and Gordon, of course, runs counter to the prevailing view, which draws an analogy between the authors of *Cato's Letters* and the Anti-Federalists. Both are classified as 'Country' combatants locked in struggle against 'Court' politics and values, championing public virtue as the essential prerequisite for good government. This, however, is based on a mis-reading of Trenchard and Gordon and if, as Wood argues, the basic division separating Anti-Federalists from Federalists was one of contrasting views of human nature, *Cato's Letters* would have had perhaps greater resonance for the Federalists than for the Anti-Federalists.

Yet what underwrote the political thinking of both Federalists and Anti-Federalists was a marked pessimism about human nature. Trenchard and Gordon reflected both sides of this pessimism. Suspicious of the power of the many they could be read with approval by Federalists and suspicious of the power of the few they could equally be read with approval by Anti-Federalists. Ultimately though what distinguishes the two parties, and makes *Cato's Letters* more of a Federalist text, is the Anti-Federalists' belief in the restorative power of participatory politics. The Federalists harboured few such illusions and shared Trenchard and Gordon's lack of confidence in the efficacy of religion and education in infusing true virtue. And while the Anti-Federalists placed their trust in moral reform and a regeneration of civic virtue as a means of turning back what they saw as a tide of corruption, the Federalists followed Trenchard and Gordon in looking to a system of mechanical devices and penal deterrents as the one durable way of safeguarding liberty. They did not expect these institutional mechanisms would make men virtuous, rather

they believed that by opposing one set of interests against another dangerous factions could be neutralised.

Federalists as different as John Adams and Alexander Hamilton found themselves in accord with Trenchard and Gordon in seeing the problem of the preservation of a modern republic resolved in Hobbesian rather than classical principles. Gerald Stourzh has pointed to Hamilton's unacknowledged debt to Hobbes. He has argued that Hobbes' identification of self-preservation as the basis of all reasoning on social and political matters was responsible for the development of the political doctrine of the radical selfishness of man and that this philosophy was of paramount significance for Hamilton's thought.⁵² Hamilton's ideas, according to Stourzh, also show unmistakably the influence of Hume, whom he followed closely in his estimation of human nature.⁵³ It could be said, however, that he resembles Trenchard and Gordon in his thought no less closely. And what has not been noted is the extent to which Hamilton's pragmatic approach to politics also chimed with that of the authors of *Cato's Letters*. Like him they attacked the central premise of classical republicanism, that a republic could not survive without civic virtue, and argued instead that it was not possible to persuade people to act in a disinterested way and that it was ridiculous to seek models of behaviour in ancient Greece or Rome. The idea that men who had a sense of common interest would preside over the government of the various states, Hamilton insisted, betrayed 'an ignorance of the true springs by which human conduct is actuated' and belied the 'original inducements and the establishment of civil power.'

⁵²See Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970).

Government had been instituted only 'Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint.'⁵⁴

Trenchard and Gordon, like Hamilton, believed that man's selfishness rather than his virtue was a sounder, more dependable principle on which to build a republic. It allowed politics to be reduced to a science. The shape of civil society could be brought under man's control by a knowledge of the laws of human behaviour, which were based on physical laws of cause and effect.⁵⁵ Hamilton may have been echoing Hume when he is reported to have remarked that the science of policy was the knowledge of human nature but he also echoed Gordon:

[H]e who knows little of human nature, will never know much of the affairs of the world, which every where derive their motion and situation from the humours and passions of men.⁵⁶

Men, Gordon accepted, could not be new-made in a pattern of virtue. Governors had to work with the material available but once they understood its properties they could mould it in the public interest. The passions rather than reason governed men so it was the passions which had to be addressed, through desire for reward or acclaim or fear of punishment they could be brought to do what they would not do when directed by reason:

Men have long found, from the weakness and depravity of themselves and one another, that most men will act for interest against duty, as often as they dare. So that to engage them to their duty, interest must be linked to the observance of it, and danger to the breach of it.⁵⁷

⁵³Ibid., pp. 71, 77, 78-9.

⁵⁴*The Federalist*, no. 15, p. 149.

⁵⁵See chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁵⁶*CL*, I, no. 31, p. 221.

⁵⁷Ibid., I, no. 60, p. 417.

Hamilton agreed, declaring that men must be taken as they were, that they could not be expected to serve the public interest unless their passions were engaged and that to place any reliance on pure patriotism was a misguided policy.⁵⁸ Men's selfish passions could not be suppressed but they could be directed to serve the public good. He believed, as did Trenchard and Gordon, that interest and not virtue was the mainspring of government. It is paradoxical, therefore, that Pocock should contend that Stourzh's study reveals Hamilton to be a thinker in the direct Court tradition and at the same time insist that Trenchard and Gordon were members of an opposing tradition.⁵⁹

It has already been argued that Trenchard and Gordon were not opposed to England's financial revolution – they were untroubled by the idea of credit and were supportive of the Bank of England. Therefore, to present their criticism of the South Sea Company scandal as a mirroring of American opposition to Hamilton's plans for a national bank and management of the public debt is misleading. Some of the rhetoric may sound similar but to claim the ideological divisions were clear-cut and remained the same across a continent and across more than half a century is to read back into *Cato's Letters* a meaning they never possessed. Even the issue of standing armies, which Hamilton supported and Trenchard and Gordon opposed, is not as simple as first appears. Revisionists, following Bailyn, have tended to see the American Revolutionary generation as working within an ideological framework established by English oppositionists in the first decades of the eighteenth century, one dominated by the fear of a Walpolean conspiracy to subvert

⁵⁸*Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government*, p. 84.

⁵⁹'Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century', 130.

the constitution. In colonial America this fear translated into fear of encroachments by the British Crown on American liberty and later to fear of Hamiltonian attempts to undermine the constitution. Yet what is not recognised is that Trenchard and Gordon were more fearful of a Jacobite conspiracy than any plottings of Walpole's ministry and were ready, therefore, to compromise on issues such as maintaining a standing army when they believed the nation to be in danger. They would have shared Hamilton's belief in the need for a strong government in the face of external threat. 'Safety from external danger', Hamilton declared, 'is the most powerful director of national conduct. Even the ardent love of liberty will, after a time, give way to its dictates.'⁶⁰ Like Hamilton, Trenchard and Gordon realised that to preserve a nation's liberty in the face of a foreign threat it was sometimes necessary for government to violate some of those very liberties which it was meant to maintain.

Where Hamilton differed from Trenchard and Gordon, however, was in his belief that some men could, by the exercise of reason, rise above the compulsions of appetite to which all men were subject. While Anti-Federalists tended to place their trust in the virtue of ordinary men, High Federalists like Hamilton placed their trust in the virtue of a natural aristocracy. In this respect, Trenchard and Gordon were closer to Federalists such as John Adams and James Madison, believing it dangerous to trust any man or body of men with unchecked power. They would certainly have agreed with Madison's pessimistic pronouncement on mankind: 'But what is government itself but the greatest reflection on human nature? If men

⁶⁰*The Federalist*, no. 8, p. 114.

were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.'⁶¹

Adams has been characterised as one of the American thinkers most steeped in the tradition of classical politics. Pocock has claimed his *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States of America* is 'perhaps the last major work of political theory written within the unmodified tradition of classical republicanism'.⁶² On reading the *Defence*, however, what one is struck by is its rejection of the ideals of classical republicanism and an embracing of all things modern:

The arts and sciences, in general, during the three or four last centuries, have had a regular course of progressive improvement. The inventions in mechanic arts, the discoveries in natural philosophy, navigation, and commerce, and the advancement of civilization and humanity, have occasioned changes in the condition of the world, and the human character, which would have astonished the most refined nations of antiquity ... Even in the theory and practice of government, in all the simple monarchies considerable improvements have been made. The checks and balances of republican governments have been in some degree adopted at the courts of princes. By the erection of various tribunals, to register the laws, and exercise the judicial power - by indulging the petitions and remonstrances of subjects, until by habit they are regarded as rights - a control has been established over ministers of state, and the royal councils, which in some degree, approaches the spirit of republics. Property is generally secure, and personal liberty seldom invaded. The press has great influence, when where it is not expressly tolerated; and the public opinion must be respected by a minister, or his place becomes insecure. Commerce begins to thrive; and if religious toleration were established personal liberty a little more protected, by giving an absolute right to demand a public trial in a certain reasonable time, and the states were invested with a few more privileges, or rather restored to some that have been taken away, those governments would be brought to as great a degree of perfection, they would approach as near to the character of governments of law and not of men, as their nature will probably admit of.⁶³

⁶¹Ibid., no. 51, pp. 319-20.

⁶²*Machiavellian Moment*, p. 526.

⁶³*The Works of John Adams*, IV, p. 283. He expresses similar sentiments in a letter to Jefferson: 'To return to the Romans, I never could discover that they possessed much Virtue, or real Liberty there. Patricians were in general griping Usurers and Tyrannical Creditors in all ages. Pride, Strength and Courage were all the Virtues that composed their National Characters.', Adams to Jefferson, 21 December 1819, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, I, p. 551. Adams was more optimistic

Gordon Wood has argued that Adams was so bound by the values and tenets of classical political thought that he missed the intellectual significance of the Constitution. The novelty of the new system was that it rested on a separation of government functions, all detached from yet responsible to and controlled by the people, with the executive, judiciary and legislature all checking and balancing each other to prevent any one power from asserting itself too far. Adams was left behind by this new thinking, Wood contends, because he clung fast to the classical theory of a mixed polity of balanced social estates.⁶⁴ To argue thus, however, would seem to assume that the theory retained the same meaning for Adams as it had done for the ancients, which would appear questionable. The idea of mixed government had long become confused with the idea of the separation of government branches and the idea of human nature on which this hybrid notion was premised was no longer necessarily a classical one. Christian or Hobbesian conceptions of human nature – portraying man as wicked or weak and irrational – offered new justifications for the principle of mixed government. When Adams spoke of mixed government he spoke of it both as a balance of social estates and as a separation of government functions. The premise on which he based his analysis, however, was a belief in the virtue of institutions to constrain and direct men's passions rather than faith in the intrinsic virtue of mankind. 'The best republics will be virtuous, and have been so' he declared, 'but we may hazard a conjecture, that the virtues have been the effect of the well ordered constitution, rather than the

about the power of republican government to instil virtue in the nation prior to independence but these hopes quickly evaporated after 1776.

⁶⁴See *The Creation of the American Republic*, pp. 567-92.

cause.' Such a constitution, he argued, should establish a proper balance between the legislative, executive and judicial components of government.⁶⁵

Adams, like Trenchard and Gordon, grounded his political thinking on both a theological and a scientific understanding of human nature, rather than a classical one. It has already been argued that Trenchard and Gordon's analysis of what motivated man was shaped by the sensationist philosophy of Hobbes and Locke and by the moral philosophy of Jansenist writers.⁶⁶ Adams was able to turn to Hume and Calvinism for an image of man ruled by self-interest rather than by reason and to see participation in government not as ennobling and as the means of achieving the greatest moral fulfilment but as a reflection on man's inability to master himself.⁶⁷ If he needed confirmation that this was indeed the true state of the human condition, he could draw on Trenchard and Gordon, whose work he knew and admired. Like them he believed man's dominant passion was self-love and that mankind was incapable of truly disinterested conduct. As early as 1762, he argued that for men to claim that their actions were motivated by virtue or by reason was merely to indulge in one of the greatest expressions of self-love, self-delusion.⁶⁸ Great men were no more to be trusted to act in accordance with the dictates of virtue or reason than other men and their superior attributes, Adams argued, made them an even greater danger than ordinary men. His solution was to throw them into a second assembly so that the danger could be contained, in emulation of the English constitution which he praised for the excellence of its

⁶⁵Adams to Jefferson, 31 July 1785, *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, I, p. 167.

⁶⁶See chapters 3 and 6 of this thesis.

⁶⁷For a re-evaluation of the Calvinist strands in the thought of Adams and other Federalists see J.P. Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

⁶⁸See 'On Delusion', *The Works of John Adams*, p. 437.

balance as 'the most stupendous fabric of human invention'.⁶⁹ He shared Trenchard and Gordon's belief that man was by nature a creature of unlimited and inextinguishable passions but that these very passions could be of 'indispensable importance' in a modern republic. It was vain to hope for a republic built on virtue but, as Trenchard argued, by directing men's passions the same effect, liberty, could be achieved:

There has been always such a constant and certain fund of corruption and malignity in human nature, that it has been rare to find that man, whose views and happiness did not center in the gratification of his appetites, and worst appetites, his luxury, his pride, his avarice, and lust of power; and who considered any publick trust reposed in him, with any other view, than as the means to satiate such unruly and dangerous desires! And this has been most eminently true of great men, and those who aspired to dominion ... The appetites therefore of men, especially of great men, are carefully to be observed and stayed, or else they will never stay themselves ... The servants of society, that is to say, its magistrates, did almost universally service it by seizing it, selling it, or plundering it; especially when they were left by the society unlimited as to their duty and wages ... But the power and sovereignty of magistrates in free countries was so qualified, and so divided into different channels, and committed to the direction of so many different men, with different interests and views, that the majority of them could seldom or never find their account in betraying their trust in fundamental instances. Their emulation, envy, fear, or interest, always made them spies and checks upon one another.⁷⁰

The great difficulty with revisionist thinking is that it fails to consider that while eighteenth century England and America continued to use the language of classical republicanism, the ideas expressed by that language may have acquired new meaning and status in the process of coming into dialogue with the languages of civil jurisprudence and moral epistemology. It fails to recognise that in America even before 1787, or at whatever later date revisionists choose to fix on as signalling the end of an era in which a structured universe of classical thought

⁶⁹'Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America', *The Works of John Adams*, p. 358.

served as the intellectual medium through which Americans perceived the political world, classical republican concepts such as civic virtue had been undermined, and in the process transformed, by what might be called a 'liberal' idea of liberty. Even before Independence the notion that the purpose of government was to protect private liberty and individual rights rather than to seek to make men virtuous was not a novel one, it was well known to all readers of *Cato's Letters*. As already shown, in newspapers and in private correspondence the *Letters* were cited in defence of those rights. Trenchard and Gordon's analysis of human nature as inherently self-interested was drawn on directly as an argument in favour of colonial self-determination and it was implicit in Federalist arguments for a federal Constitution. When the American Revolutionaries opposed to the British Crown and later the opponents of Hamiltonian financial policies adopted the language of denunciation used in *Cato's Letters* to attack Court corruption, it does not mean their thinking, any more than that of Trenchard and Gordon, was dominated by classical republican ideas of virtue and liberty.⁷¹ To argue thus, however, is not to suggest that the American Revolutionary generation used republican rhetoric in a cynical fashion, to legitimise economic interests by cloaking them in the language of virtue. It is merely to reiterate that for eighteenth century America, and England, ideas of positive and negative liberty could exist side by side. The co-existence of both ideas of liberty in men's minds, however, means that the classical republican

⁷⁰*CL*, I, no. 60, p. 416.

⁷¹As J.P. Diggins has argued, there is a difference between 'a rhetoric of accusation and a requirement of affirmation, between suspecting others of conspiring against liberty and virtue and being called upon to uphold virtue itself ... Reacting to fear of "power", "tyranny" and "conspiracy" is perfectly compatible with the traditional pattern of interest politics and self-preservation in the Hobbesian and Lockean sense. But to act for reasons of "virtue" implies, in the classical sense, the capacity to subordinate immediate personal interests to the "General Welfare."', *The Lost Soul of American Politics*, p. 22.

paradigm could never have occupied the pre-eminent position ascribed to it by early revisionists.⁷²

⁷²Despite the degree of consensus that has developed between scholars on either side of the republicanism-liberalism debate in the last decade, it is difficult not to see it, at least in part, as an exercise in 'papering over the cracks'. This is hardly surprising - the debate had become increasingly vitriolic during the 1980s. As Alan Gibson points out in a recent retrospective essay, many scholars had begun to find it 'sterile, unproductive and even nauseating'. Those scholars, however, who have continued to explore the intellectual origins of the American Founding, Gibson claims, have formed a consensus 'around the conciliatory and catholic but also diffuse claims that the political thought of the Founders is best understood as an amalgam of liberalism, republicanism, and perhaps other traditions of political thought.' This is all very well but when one examines the positions taken by these scholars one wonders just how far forward the debate has actually advanced. Undeniably scholars on either side of the republican-liberal debate have conceded some ground. They could scarcely have done otherwise. Common ground always existed between the two camps but as lines became more entrenched during the 1980s this fact was lost sight of. Now however, according to Gibson, in place of the old republican-liberal debate a new 'multiple traditions approach' has developed. One of these approaches is the 'Neo-Lockean Synthesis'. Among its proponents are J. David Greenstone and Michael Zuckert. Greenstone, Gibson explains, 'has emphasized the presence of both republicanism and liberalism within the political thought of the Founders, but has also argued that this diversity can itself be embraced within a broader consensus of liberalism.' Studies by Zuckert similarly 'reinforce this understanding of Lockean liberalism as the core of the political thought of the American Founding, while simultaneously showing how other species of political thought were assimilated into it.'

Another approach identified by Gibson is that which he calls 'liberal republicanism'. Advocates of this approach include Ralph Ketcham, Drew McCoy, Garrett Ward Sheldon and, especially, Lance Banning. These scholars recognise, Gibson says, that liberalism and republicanism were both present and important in the American Founding. They differ from Neo-Lockeans, however, in contending that eighteenth century Americans 'still understood republicanism as a set of beliefs about the importance of public liberty, virtue and the public good. These concepts, they emphasize, had great longevity; and if these concepts were not strictly classical in the way they were conceived by the Founders, then they nevertheless retained aspects of their original classical meaning. In short, because this group includes many of the scholars who formerly espoused the "republican synthesis", they tend to stress the persistence of classical republicanism concepts in the face of the advent of modernity and, in Ketcham's words, to view the Revolution, and perhaps even more the Constitution, as shaped, uniquely and creatively, by the tension between a still-vigorous classical republican outlook and the new, modern, democratic liberalism". See Alan Gibson, 'Ancients, Moderns and Americans: The Republican-Liberalism Debate Revisited', *History of Political Thought*, 21 (2000), 261-307, at 261, 261-2, 266, 267, 275.

The 'multiple traditions approach' softens the differences between scholars but clearly it does not eliminate them. A truce may have been called but questions remain to be answered. One such question is the role played by Trenchard and Gordon in shaping the thought of the American Revolutionary generation. It is the contention of this thesis that in respect of *Cato's Letters* for too long the emphasis has been placed on the civic humanist aspect of Trenchard and Gordon's work. This thesis has sought to prove that the overwhelming evidence suggests that Trenchard and Gordon should be regarded as modern, as opposed to classical, republicans and it is perhaps predominantly in this guise that they appeared to the American Founders.

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